

SATURDAY

QUESTIONS OF SPORT

THE WORLD FOR \$1,000



THE INDEPENDENT

No 2,882

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I will not be pushed, says Major

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

John Major yesterday bluntly reasserted his belief in the very "One Nation" Toryism that Baroness Thatcher had derided in her controversial lecture and declared: "I will not be pushed off what I believe to be right."

In a determined effort to quell party anger in the aftermath of Lady Thatcher's lengthy right-wing critique of Tory "problems", the Prime Minister said: "We have been a One Nation Conservative Party since the beginning of time and we are now... how can one

possibly have a two-nation party of any sort?"

In a robust first public reaction to the lecture in which Lady Thatcher suggested that Conservatives had not lived up to middle-class expectations, Mr Major declared in his Huntingdon constituency that his administration had delivered a "platform of prosperity" and added: "I do not intend to be pushed off it."

As MPs on either side of the Tories' ideological fault-line queued up to defend or attack Lady Thatcher's Thursday lecture in a fresh outbreak of public squabbling, Mr Major refrained from direct personal

criticism of his predecessor. As a "very important part of the Conservative Party," she had "input" into party policy, the Prime Minister said.

But Lord Howe - her one-time ally, Chancellor, and Foreign Secretary - was withering about her remark that "One Nation" Tories were more like "No Nation" Tories because of their espousal of European "federalism". It had been a "glib phrase and an expensive one", he said. "I fear it is her latter-day obsession with that question [Europe] that risks doing so much damage to her own reputation and even in the last resort to the achievements

of the Government, in which we all worked together."

In contrast to the official Tory line, publicly advanced by Mr Major yesterday, that Lady Thatcher's lecture had been "misconstrued" and was essentially an attack on Labour, it was freely acknowledged in his circle that he had been dismayed by content regarded as "unhelpful."

John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, said Mr Major was now "at war" with Lady Thatcher but the Prime Minister declared: "I have set out what I believe to be right and I shall fight for what I believe to be right and I will not be

pushed off what I believe to be right."

Ray Whitney, chairman of the party's Positive European Group, said Lady Thatcher's speech had been "sad" and that she looked "old and ill" on television, while Julian Critchley, the outgoing MP for Aldershot, suggested that "Lady Thatcher ought really to retire and open a tea shop in Bury St Edmunds."

Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, and one of the four right-wingers singled out for praise, said: "There are two interesting things about her speech - what she actually said and what you

in the media were determined to find in it. Five lines you've managed to blow up out of all proportion. What's in the rest of it includes a very extensive, detailed and effective demolition job on Tony Blair and the Labour Party."

Yet even on the most generous count, Lady Thatcher's attack on Labour occupies no more than two of the nine closely typed pages in her lecture text - about half the length of a section entitled "Re-thinking Conservative Policy" and about the same length as one headed "What Has Gone Wrong?"

Leading article, page 16



City bank in insider deals probe

DAVID HELLIER

The City was last night preparing itself for a big insider-dealing inquiry, focusing on a link between a public relations firm and employees at Robert Fleming, the investment bank.

Department of Trade and Industry inspectors are next week widely expected to be called on to investigate.

The London Stock Exchange, whose surveillance department investigates allegations about the improper use of privileged information, has been listening to tape-recorded

to pass the information to the Department of Trade and Industry.

Yesterday a source close to the investigation said a decision had been delayed: "as more and more information comes up. But we are pretty well there now and there could be an announcement early next week."

Three employees at Robert Fleming spent time away from the office after the New Year break while the bank conducted its own internal inquiries. The stock exchange first investigated share dealings in Caradon last September after the building products firm was forced to bring forward its results and make a profits warning.

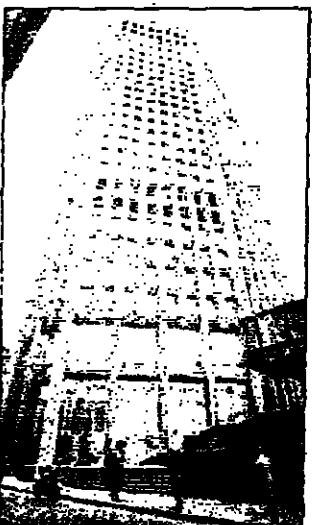
On the Friday before the results were due there was unusually high turnover in the shares, which fell sharply.

At the time stock market dealers expressed concern over the trades, saying that the volume of trade implied that some people were aware of Caradon's poor performance in advance of the publication of the company's figures.

The initial investigation appears to have lapsed. But in the past few weeks fresh information has been passed to the stock exchange, which forms the basis of its latest inquiries.

Financial Dynamics believes it is the victim of a smear campaign and rejected suggestions that anyone was contemplating resignation. Financial Dynamics was recently rebuked by the City Takeover Panel in an unrelated incident which involved passing on information about a client's future profits performance during the course of a contested takeover battle.

Some directors of Financial Dynamics are expected to receive hundreds of thousands of pounds in earn-outs shortly, while others are hoping to receive incentives with new share options.



Stock Exchange may be the centre of fresh controversy

conversations between Financial Dynamics, one of the City's largest public relations companies, and employees of Robert Fleming, Financial Dynamics' clients include Tesco and Kingfisher.

The exchange is trying to ascertain whether anyone at Robert Fleming or any of its member firms made improper use of privileged financial information about the building company Caradon in September last year.

If they believe there is a prima facie case of wrongdoing, the usual procedure would be



East meets West: US soldiers greet the first Russian troops to serve with Nato in Bosnia as they arrive in Tuzla, Report, page 10

Photograph: AFP

DNA test for 1,200 lorry drivers

CHRIS MOWBRAY
and JASON BENNETTO

DNA testing is to be used nationally for the first time in an attempt to catch the murderer of the French student Celine Figard, whom police revealed yesterday was probably raped before being strangled.

The naked body of Celine, 19, was found dumped in woodland in Worcestershire 10 days after she was given a lift by a lorry driver.

Police hunting her killer said yesterday that they intend to take DNA samples from all 1,200 drivers who own white Mercedes lorries similar to the one which Celine climbed into before she disappeared.

It will be the first time that mass testing has been carried out nationally and on the mem-

bers of a particular trade. Large-scale screening in previous murder inquiries has only been done on a local basis.

In the most recent case up to 800 DNA samples, from mouth swabs, were taken from young men in the hunt for the killer of the schoolgirl Naomi Smith. The tests started in October from the village of Ansley Common, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire, where Naomi, 15, was found stabbed and sexually assaulted. In November a 19-year-old man was charged with her murder.

The latest development in the Celine murder inquiry comes as police revealed that the student had been raped. Samples taken from her body have provided police with DNA, which they believe belongs to her killer. Forensic scientists plan to

compare this sample with those taken from the lorry drivers. Anyone refusing to co-operate will be further investigated.

Celine was last seen on 19 December being given a lift at Chichester Services on the M4 in Berkshire. The driver of the vehicle is described as a white man, in his late 30s and with fair or ginger hair and a close-cropped beard.

Detective Chief Superintendent John McCammon, the head of West Mercia CID, said: "The forensic evidence shows that she had sexual intercourse since travelling from France and I believe it took place without her consent."

This sample will be of great value in eliminating drivers from our investigation. If we carry out DNA testing on all drivers of White Mercedes lorries,

we should find the man responsible or discover that he has gone missing.

"The new evidence will be welcomed by members of the haulage industry who are genuinely aghast and appalled."

The DNA from Celine's body will also be checked against the newly established national DNA database of "genetic fingerprints" to see whether it matches any samples taken from criminals or at the scene of other offences.

The database - the first in the world - was set up last April. Since then police have been able to take samples from anyone being questioned in connection with a recorded crime. At first, only samples from a limited number of categories - sex offences, burglary and serious assault - are being recorded.

Harlequins turn Japanese in rugby revolution

STEVE BALE

Harlequins are blessed with one of the most evocative names in rugby, but what's in a name? The Quins yesterday entered into a three-year corporate partnership with NEC, the Japanese electronics giant, worth around £1.5m which from next season will rechristen them, as their publicity blurb puts it, "NEC Harlequins... of London".

Sports editors, on the other hand, may take some persuading. The coming of professionalism had already shown that nothing was sacrosanct, so perhaps we should not be surprised that the Harlequin Football

Club was prepared to adulterate the title that had served with distinction for 130 years - 31 years longer than NEC.

But this is the price of progress, as several other sporting institutions have discovered. Instead of the plain old FA Cup, we now have "The FA Cup, sponsored by Littlewoods" and the home of Test cricket in south London is "The Foster's Oval".

NEC's money will go a considerable way towards funding the player contracts that are being drawn up ready for the end of the rugby football union's moratorium in May, leaving Roger Looker, the club chairman, to suggest Quins would be

"highly competitive in the terms that will be offered to our players". More in keeping with Harlequin tradition, yesterday's announcement took place at the Savoy Hotel in London, with a goody turn-out of players - though not the England captain Will Carling - present to hear the personally felicitous news.

Quins' partnership with NEC coincides with plans for a new 4,200-seater east stand at the Stoop Memorial Ground for which consent has been granted by Richmond council. Work on the £4m project is due to start at the end of this season, with the seating in place for next season and work completed by the end of the year.

NEC's support, designed so that Harlequins are not bought out as other clubs have been, also incorporates a youth-development programme initially based in London and taking in the sports scholarships the club is inaugurating at the University of Surrey. Quins intend that this is developed on a national basis.

"At this time of considerable change in the game, we have reviewed our financial position in detail and will be introducing a number of major initiatives in the coming months," Mr Looker said. Among the initiatives are the NEC-Harlequins cheerleaders: Adrian Stoop must be turning in his grave, if only to get a better view.



Will Carling, England captain and NEC Harlequin

IN BRIEF

Ecstasy death warning

A teenager who went into a coma after taking ecstasy appealed to youngsters not to "dance with death". Page 3

Millennium showdown

Greenwich and Birmingham lead the contest to host the Millennium Exhibition. Page 8

Today's weather

Breezy with sunny spells and showers. Page 2



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Sita would be glad to collect her water from a stand pipe



Recently thousands of people in the UK had to collect their water from stand pipes and water tankers - and that's exactly what Sita and her community would like to do.

Because for many people in the developing world the only sources of water are polluted ponds and rivers many miles away.

If you sponsor a child like Sita through ACTIONAID, we could work closely with the child's community to provide a permanent source of safe, clean water close to the village. Besides improving their health, it would give children time to go to school and allow mothers to earn their own income.

Please sponsor a child, and give a community, and its children some of the things we take for granted.

Please send me details about sponsoring a child, or call 01460 61073.

I am interested in:

Child Sponsorship

Community Development

I don't remember a child now, but enclose a gift of:

£10 £20 £30 £40 £50

My name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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ACTIONAID

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Wildcat strike hits post in London

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

An unofficial strike yesterday caused widespread disruption to London's postal system in a dispute over casual workers which began with a fight between two Royal Mail employees.

Management taped up pillar boxes in the capital yesterday as four out of the five main sorting offices were hit.

The altercation between two postmen at the office in Cricklewood, north-west Lon-

don, last Friday resulted in one of the men being dismissed, which then sparked a wildcat walkout.

The stoppage spread to two more offices in north-west London and only came to an end when strikers' leaders agreed to a return to work package which involved the introduction of casual staff to clear the backlog.

A fresh walkout ensued on Wednesday however when strikers accused management of employing far more casual

workers than had been agreed. By yesterday the action had spread to other parts of London, although most delivery offices were working, according to management.

The increasing "casualisation" of Royal Mail jobs is the subject of prolonged argument between management and the Communication Workers' Union, which was yesterday at pains to dissociate itself from the unofficial stoppage.

A spokeswoman for the Royal Mail said the main reason for

the fresh walkout at Cricklewood was that staff wanted overtime for clearing the backlog from the first strike.

The spokeswoman said the strike had only caused patchy disruption and that the union and management were hopeful that the conflict could be brought to a speedy end.

In a ballot result yesterday, Royal Mail workers throughout Britain voted by nearly five to one to accept an inflation-breaching pay rise of 3.5 per cent.

Production at Ford's largest plant, at Dagenham, was disrupted yesterday as parts delivery drivers walked out on unofficial strike.

The stoppage was thought to have been staged in protest at the company's "final" pay offer and comes at a sensitive time for the company. Later this month the Dagenham plant is scheduled to begin production of a Mazda version of the Fiesta. The Japanese company is hoping to sell the model almost exclusively outside Britain.

Ford's 22,000 manual workers are holding a strike ballot over the pay offer which would yield a 4.75 per cent increase this year followed by 4.5 per cent, or the inflation rate plus 0.5 per cent, next year. The company however rejected a claim for a two-hour reduction in the working week to 37 hours.

Meanwhile Charles Golden, chairman and managing director of Vauxhall, wrote to the company's 7,700 manual workers warning them that their

jobs would be in jeopardy if they rejected a "final" three-year pay offer.

The package includes a 4.5 per cent increase this year and an increase in line with the inflation rate in the two subsequent years. The company has also offered a one-hour cut in the working week.

The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union has urged its members to accept the proposed settlement, but the Transport and General has made no recommendation.

Impasse on arms set to continue

ALAN MURDOCH
Dublin

Former US senator George Mitchell said in Dublin yesterday that his three-man decommissioning body had "not yet made any decisions" on how to resolve the impasse over paramilitary weapons.

He was speaking after an hour-long meeting with the Taoiseach, John Bruton, and the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring. But Mr Mitchell remained optimistic that the body could complete its report by its target date in the middle of this month.

Neither side was prepared to discuss details of their talks, but Mr Mitchell confirmed he had received a series of suggestions and analyses.

Asked about speculation that the Mitchell body was considering how a new elected assembly in Northern Ireland might assist political progress, Mr Bruton declined to say if he had outlined any formula under which Dublin might accept such a plan, which is being urged by Unionist and Alliance parties.

But he stressed his government had expressed its willingness to discuss the idea in the Downing Street joint communiqué last month. Mr Bruton said the matter was one to be dealt with during the political track of the talks, rather than the parallel arms track.

Earlier, Mr Spring said the government thought there was "no possibility" of nationalists accepting a return to any Stormont-type body which recreated the majority Unionist domination of the minority Catholic community. This had been repeatedly voiced by both the SDLP and Sinn Féin.

Indeed, after meeting Mr Mitchell, the Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, said: "As far as we are concerned any return to a Stormont Assembly or indeed any variation of the proposals put by David Trimble is merely part of the stalling of this process. It's a non-runner."

'Brief Encounter' clock returns to Waterloo with perfect timing



Changing times: The clock at Waterloo station in central London, a romantic rendezvous for lovers, is back in working order after a major facelift. Photograph: Edward Sykes

The four-sided clock, immortalised in the 1946 classic Brief Encounter, starring Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson, has kept time at the station since 1922. Photograph: Kobal

Consortium takes directions for first private-finance road

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

The contract for Britain's first privately financed road was signed yesterday but details of the deal were kept secret by the Department of Transport because of "commercial confidentiality".

The contract, which is the first in a Government initiative under the Design, Build, Finance and Operate scheme - scheduled to cost £1bn over three years - involves the construction of the two-mile Haltwhistle by-pass on the A69 and maintenance on the 50-mile road between Newcastle and Carlisle.

The contract has been won by Road Link, a consortium of six

companies including two Italian firms, which will be responsible for both minor and major work on the road from the start of the contract on 1 April until 2026.

Motorists will in fact not notice any difference in the way the road is operated and will certainly not be charged for the use of the road. The contractor's income is obtained from "shadow tolls" paid by the Department of Transport, based on the amount of traffic on the road. At present there are between 8,000 and 38,000 vehicles using the road each day and this is estimated to increase to between 10,000 and 57,000 over the next 10 years.

The Highways Agency, the government agency responsible

for the motorway and trunk road network, has refused to release details of how much the contractors will receive over the 30-year period.

In briefing papers, the Agency says that the cost of the bypass alone would be £9.4m but that the Independent has learnt that it will in fact cost almost £20m. Routine maintenance of the 50-mile road would normally cost around £100,000 per year, and full-scale refurbishment around £200,000 per mile. The contractor will be penalised if, for example, the road has to be closed for roadworks or the maintenance standard drops below the required level.

Environmentalists have criticised the scheme because they

say that it is an incentive for contractors to encourage more traffic on to the road to obtain extra income.

Roger Higman, roads campaigner for Friends of the Earth criticised the cost, saying: "This is an expensive way of building roads because the contractor has to borrow money at a higher cost than the Government would be able to do." He also criticised the secrecy of the deal: "They are covering up the fact that it's a very expensive way of paying for roads which commits future governments to shelling out a lot of money to contractors for the next 30 years." The contractor, he said, faced little real risk and was set to make large profits.

Heseltine ups stakes in ideological war of words

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, renewed his efforts to up the ideological ante with Labour yesterday with a speech reiterating that Tony Blair's "stakeholder economy" would cut down individual rights in favour of local councils, unions and a regulatory state.

Brushing aside dismay among some Tory left-wingers over the claim of a return to 1970s-style union power, an undeterred Mr Heseltine pressed on with accusations that Labour was seeking to

replace parents and teachers with local authorities in the management of schools and re-establish power for the trade unions.

Labour also wanted to "penalise" company shareholders "through their punitive windfall tax and to reintroduce central control of the utilities through an ever greater extension of the regulatory regime", he said.

In an implicit rebuttal to Baroness Thatcher's claim that the Tory party was failing the middle classes, Mr Heseltine declared that "every day the evidence becomes clearer that this Conservative government is achieving its grand purpose".

Independent sales up, Guardian down

Average sales of the Independent rose by 13,000 a day to 294,000 last year - a 4.5 per cent increase over the average daily sale in 1994.

By contrast, sales of the Guardian fell by nearly 4,000 a day on average, according to the official figures released yesterday by the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

The Independent's circulation also gained in December, when average daily sales were 7,000 better than the same month in 1994. Sales of the Guardian were 3,000 a day lower than in December the previous year.

The Independent on Sunday enjoyed similar gains last year, with its average circulation rising 4,000 in 1995 to 323,000. Average weekly sales of the Observer fell by 29,000.

IN BRIEF

Freeze boosted Christmas deaths

The toll of the Christmas freeze was revealed yesterday as official figures showed there were 15,443 deaths in the week ending 5 January after the very cold spell, more than 1,500 than expected for the time of year and a five-year high.

Provisional figures from the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys show pneumonia deaths at 2,253 between 29 December and 5 January compared with 1,429 in the same week in 1994-95. Deaths from flu were up from 4 the same time last year to 27.

A spokeswoman for the OPCS said: "Most of the increase [in deaths] is due to diseases of the respiratory system."

Camelot aids police

Police trying to identify a pedestrian killed when he was hit by a car contacted the organisers of the National Lottery for help. The victim, killed near Lilley, North Hertfordshire, had no identification with him, but he did have a lottery ticket, traced back to Sainsbury in Stevenage.

M&S libel writs

Marks & Spencer has issued a writ against Granada TV over allegations made in last Monday's *World in Action* programme that company products were made at overseas factories which used child labour. The company issued a writ against the *News of the World* which carried similar allegations.

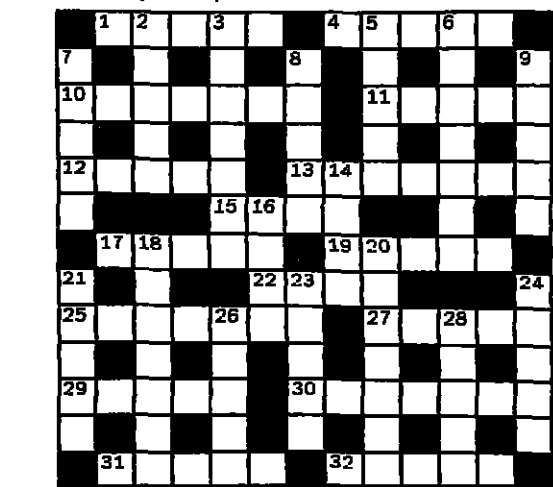
Maxwell jury still out

The jury in the trial of Ian and Kevin Maxwell and Larry Trachtenberg was sent to a hotel for a fifth night after failing to reach verdicts on all the charges of defrauding pension funds. The jurors will reconvene today.

concise crossword

No. 2882 Saturday 13 January

By Phil



- ACROSS**
- Type of flat bread (5)
 - Uncertainty (5)
 - Primitive wind instrument (7)
 - Son's cousin? (5)
 - Bring to bear (5)
 - Tightly-packed fish (7)
 - Lewd glance (4)
 - No longer colourful (5)
 - Air (5)
 - Not at home (4)
 - Learned institute (7)
 - Of the nose (5)
 - Muse of lyric poetry (5)
 - Grew narrower (7)
 - Rubber tree 'sap' (5)
 - Cut (5)
- DOWN**
- Pointless (5)
 - Scots emblem (7)
 - Possessor (5)
 - Most direct route - (3-4) (7)
 - ... for one who makes this (5)
 - Elevate (5)
 - Wigwag (5)
 - Operatic song (4)
 - Dutch cheese (4)
 - US state (7)
 - Neural connection (7)
 - Humped animal (5)
 - Earp (5)
 - Fuss smoothly (5)
 - Eat away (5)
 - Sudden increase (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

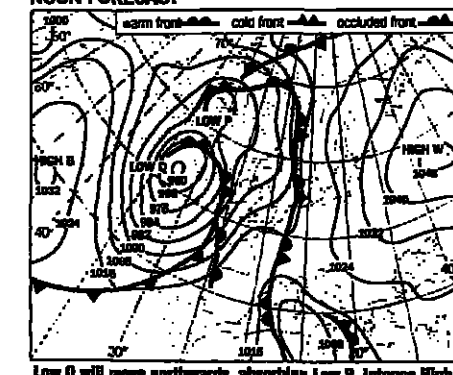
Across: 1 Syrup, 4 Tissues (Surreptitious), 8 Felucca, 9 Nadir, 10 Recto, 11 Bardrum, 13 Loll, 15 Nation, 17 Galore, 20 Lead, 22 Dog days, 24 Abhor, 26 Natal, 27 Avarice, 28 Ennoble, 29 Twist.

Down: 1 Saffron, 2 Reize, 3 Ploose, 4 Travel, 5 Sonar, 6 Undergo, 7 Scrum, 12 Alps, 14 Only, 16 Tighen, 18 Adamant, 19 Earnest, 21 Escape, 23 Dance, 25 Ad-lib, 26 Hail.

Notes

weather

NOON FORECAST



Low 0 will move northwards, absorbing Low P, intense High W will continue to drift very slowly westwards.

WORLD WEATHER (temperatures in degrees Celsius; winds in knots; clouds in tenths; sun in tenths; rain in mm; snow in cm; fog in miles; visibility in miles; time in GMT)

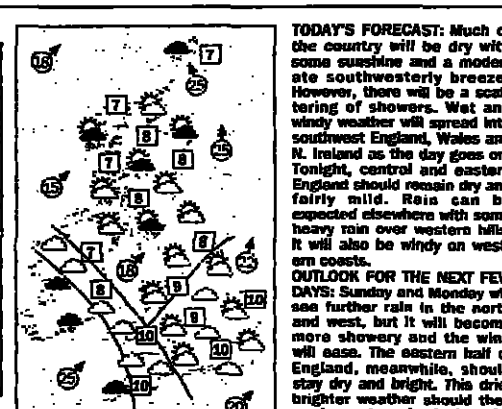
Location	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Sun	Rain	Snow	Fog	Vis
London	12.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	11.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	10.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	9.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	8.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	7.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	6.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	5.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	4.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	3.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	2.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	1.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	0.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	-1.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	-2.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	-3.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	-4.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	-5.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	-6.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	-7.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	-8.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	-9.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	-10.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	-11.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	-12.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	-13.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	-14.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	-15.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	-16.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	-17.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	-18.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	-19.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	-20.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	-21.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	-22.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	-23.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	-24.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	-25.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	-26.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	-27.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	-28.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	-29.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	-30.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	-31.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	-32.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	-33.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	-34.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	-35.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	-36.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	-37.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	-38.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	-39.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	-40.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Newcastle	-41.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Glasgow	-42.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Belfast	-43.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Edinburgh	-44.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Cardiff	-45.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Bristol	-46.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Exeter	-47.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
London	-48.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Birmingham	-49.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10
Manchester	-50.0	10	100	0	0	0	0	10

Highs indicated in inches.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0330 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news

Source: The Automobile Association. Data changed at 3.30 pm on 12 January. 4.30 pm on 13 January. 1.00 pm on 14 January.



Low 0 will move northwards, absorbing Low P, intense High W will continue to drift very slowly westwards.

WORLD WEATHER (temperatures in degrees Celsius; winds in knots; clouds in tenths; sun in tenths; rain in mm; snow in cm; fog in miles; visibility in miles; time in GMT)

	C	F		C	F		C	F
Los Angeles	64	80	Los Angeles	64	80	Los Angeles	64	80
San Francisco	64	80	San Francisco	64	80	San Francisco	64	80
New York	64	80	New York	64	80	New York	64	80
Chicago	64	80	Chicago	64	80	Chicago	64	80
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Man seriously hurt as Volvo plunges 70ft from car park

PETER VICTOR

A driver crashed his Volvo through a barrier yesterday and plunged 70 feet off a multi-storey car park.

The man, believed to be in his sixties, was seriously ill in hospital last night after the drop from level four of the five-storey council-run building in Canterbury, Kent.

The motorist, a registered Volvo 440 automatic, ploughed into a metal sprung barrier and then over the edge of the building, landing on its roof on concrete below. At first police feared the car had landed on top of another. But it ended up in an empty private car-parking

area. Its roof was completely caved in and the windows were shattered. The driver was helped out by firemen and taken to the Kent and Canterbury hospital where his condition was said to be serious.

The car landed in the road opposite the Canterbury branch of British Home Stores. The assistant manager, Suzanne Heron, said staff and customers heard a "very large bang". She said: "Nobody saw it actually fall, but everyone heard it. Members of the public ran to help and we called the emergency services."

An eyewitness, Julian Hicks, 21, a student from the city, said: "I just heard what seemed like

the noise made when scaffolding is unloaded off a lorry, but I looked out and couldn't believe I was seeing the car falling. It seemed to take forever to reach the ground, but then there was the most almighty crash which reverberated on and on."

Lucy Bright, 32, a shopper who also lives locally said: "People were running to Rose Lane where the car ended up on its back. But the emergency services were there fairly quickly and cordoned the scene off."

Canterbury city council said it had launched an inquiry into the crash at the car park which sits on an island in the centre of the city. A spokeswoman con-

firmed that the multi-storey car park, which is built from reinforced concrete, was constructed in 1965.

The accident mirrors a Volvo car advertisement where one of its cars plunges from a building and lands without harming the vehicle or its dummy occupant.

Kent police said the incident was being treated as an accident. A police spokesman said: "We do not know what happened."

"It appears, somehow, that the car went over the edge and landed on its roof on the floor below. Miraculously the driver survived the crash and has been taken to hospital. Amazingly, no one else was hurt."



Police inspecting the car in Rose Lane after its 70ft plunge from the car park (right) Photographs: Phil Houghton

Ecstasy's dangers: Coma survivor vows never again as mother urges young to 'say no'

Teenager warns of 'dance with death' drug

IAN MACKINNON

A teenager who spent 24 hours in a coma after taking ecstasy yesterday appealed to young people not to take the drug which she likened to a "dance with death".

Helen Cousins, 19, appeared at a news conference minutes before going for a second operation to rectify the tracheotomy which became necessary after she suffered a relapse during her recovery.

Barely able to speak above a whisper because of the tube still in her throat, the sales assistant from Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, was asked if she would ever take ecstasy again and replied: "Never again."

Miss Cousins fell into the coma in the early hours of New Year's Day minutes after she was taken to Peterborough district hospital.

She had taken the drug at a nightclub on New Year's Eve, but had been taken to a flat shortly after 1am when friends noticed that she was not feeling well.

When her condition continued to deteriorate, her friends called an ambulance and she was taken to the hospital's intensive care unit where she remained for two days.

Doctors believe that her coma had been induced by the seven litres of water she drank in a desperate bid to combat the effects of the drug, which can cause dehydration among those who dance for long periods.

The drug also interferes with

the abilities of the kidneys to get rid of the water and can bring on a coma.

Yesterday, at the Edith Cavell Hospital, Peterborough, Miss Cousins appeared at the conference flanked by her mother, Janet, 51, and father, Trevor, 47.

Simon Harrison, the hospital's surgical and life support general manager, said that her recovery had been so dramatic that she would probably be released from hospital today after the operation to remove the tracheotomy tube.

Mrs Cousins thanked the doctors for their skill and the public for their support, including Paul and Janet Betts, whose daughter Leah died after taking ecstasy last November.

But Mrs Cousins added her own appeal. "I'm pleading to all young people, don't chance your life, it can happen to you. If you take ecstasy it can take your life. Nothing is worth that. Don't weaken, be strong and say, 'no'."

"Helen would like to say that it is when problems like this hit home you realise ecstasy isn't worth the dance with death."

Detectives in Stafford yesterday unveiled a haul of lethal fake ecstasy tablets worth £1.5m. The 100,000 tablets were found to contain the stimulant ephedrine and the anesthetic ketamine. A similar batch of tablets, imprinted with a question mark, were found in Birmingham on Tuesday. Police warned the drugs could kill.



Helen Cousins: Spent 24 hours in a coma after taking ecstasy Photograph: Geoff Robinson

Fears for Britons as troops comb jungle

WILL BENNETT

Indonesia yesterday moved hundreds of commandos into the area where four British biologists have been kidnapped by separatist rebels as fears rose that any military confrontation could put the captives' lives at risk.

Troops from the Indonesian army's special forces arrived in the Irian Jaya region of New Guinea to try to stop the guerrillas of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), which is fighting for independence, from taking their prisoners into neighbouring Papua New Guinea.

The four Britons, a Dutch couple, a German and 17 Indonesians were seized in the mountain village of Mapenduma on Monday. They had been working on research projects in a remote jungle area which is home to one of the world's last Stone Age cultures.

The Cambridge graduates Daniel Start, 21, from London; Bill Oates, 22, from Jeddah in the Scottish borders; Anna McIvor, 21, from Bournemouth, and Annette van der Kolk, 21, from Fleet, in Hampshire, were researching plant and animal life as part of a programme to turn the area into a protected national forest.

Brigadier General Suwano

Adiwijoyo, spokesman for the Indonesian army, said that he believed that there was little chance that the rebels would get through the thick jungle to the border, 240 miles from where they captured the hostages.

Greg Roberts, an Australian journalist in New Guinea, said yesterday that the OPM had announced that the hostages were well but that they could not guarantee their safety if Indonesian troops moved in.

"Until recently non-combatants were left alone by the OPM but two recent kidnappings and apparent killings of Indonesians do tend to indicate a major change in direction by the OPM," he said.

But David Marfleet, of the Mission Aviation Fellowship, who spent nine years as a pilot supplying mission stations in Irian Jaya, said he did not believe the Britons were in danger. He added: "My feeling is that [the OPM] are trying to make an international statement to get publicity for their cause."

A Foreign Office spokesman said that two British diplomats had flown to Irian Jaya, where they had spoken to missionaries and local officials. From there one had travelled to the area where the hostages were seized to try to get more information. After a Foreign Office

briefing for the hostages' families in London yesterday Caroline Miller, Mr Start's mother, said: "They earnestly wanted to help the local people through their conservation project. This was always their purpose. They are completely innocent. We wish to see them again soon, safe and well. We are very concerned for their welfare."

Indian police in the southern city of Bangalore are still hunting for the killer of a 30-year-old British traveller who was stabbed to death on Tuesday. Police said the victim's 25-year-old British fiancée was also raped that same evening by a rickshaw driver.

The city's deputy police commissioner, Prabir Sood, said that the body of the man, who came from Oxfordshire, was found on Wednesday in a sack thrown into a ditch outside the city. "It was a strange and unfortunate coincidence. There seems to be absolutely no connection between these two terrible events," he said.

However, a spokesman for the British High Commission in New Delhi, said: "We're still awaiting the full police report. Coincidences do happen. But the odds against these two things occurring without connection are very high."



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Trespass law used against road protest

DANNY PENMAN

The Criminal Justice Act was used against campaigners opposing the Newbury bypass yesterday after calls for the police to take a harder line. More than 30 people were arrested, mostly for aggravated trespass, dur-

ing clashes between protesters and security guards.

The Aggravated Trespass Provisions of the contentious 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act have rarely been used against anti-road campaigners for fear of inflaming already volatile situations.

Thames Valley and Hampshire police have faced mounting criticism of their tactics. Assistant Chief Constable Ian Blair of Thames Valley Police, who is in overall charge of the operation, has insisted all week that his officers would be strictly "bipartisan".

Activists have halted work on the road for three days this week, prompting calls from politicians, including the MP for Newbury, David Rendell, for the police to help security guards. Contractors began felling trees at the southern end of the bypass route at dawn yesterday

and cleared about 30 trees before protesters swarmed up the trees. Sixteen people were arrested. Three miles to the north another crew began clearing trees from a disused railway cutting. Protesters climbed trees and began erecting walkways and 18 others were arrested.

Son's gold strike has a ring of fortune

JOHN ARLIDGE

A grandmother celebrated yesterday after her son found her gold signet ring more than 20 years after she lost it.

Doreen Johnston, a retired nurse, lost the ring when it slipped from her finger as she played with her sons and the family's dog in a park in Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway, in 1974. Family members visited the park every day for a week to search for it but gave up when they found nothing.

This year Mrs Johnston's son Robert, 26, began work on a project redeveloping Agnew Park as a tourist attraction. As he dug over the ground earlier this week he spotted something glittering in the mud.

The ring bore Mrs Johnston's initials and after an inspection he realised it must be his mother's. "I really was astonished... It was against all odds. I'd have had a better chance of winning the lottery," said Mrs Johnston, 55. "The ring was a gift from my grandfather... I had completely given up hope of finding it."

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news

Irish set to take nuclear waste fight to Europe

STEPHEN GOODWIN

The Irish government yesterday indicated that it was prepared to pursue Britain through the European and international courts in order to prevent the dumping of nuclear waste beneath the coast of west Cumbria.

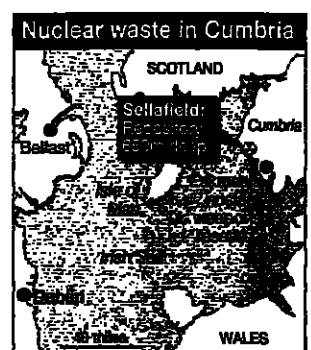
In an unprecedented move, Emmet Stagg, the republic's minister of state for energy, registered his fears in a personal appearance at the public inquiry into UK Nirex's plan for a £195m underground laboratory which will test to establish that the rocks are safe enough to hold radioactive waste.

The state-owned nuclear-waste company wants to prove the case for a £2.5bn repository 650 metres deep to take radioactive material from British Nuclear Fuel's Sellafield reprocessing plant on the edge of the Irish Sea.

No minister of a foreign government has ever appeared at a local planning inquiry in Britain, and the arrival of Mr Stagg and his entourage in Mercedes limousines caused quite a stir in the former mining community of Cleator Moor, Cumbria. But Mr Stagg said he needed to "highlight the

concern of his government at a project that will add to the pollution of the Irish Sea", adding: "Any radioactive contamination of the Irish Sea simply is not acceptable."

Mr Stagg released the text of a letter sent to the European Commission complaining of



breaches of community law by Nirex. Whether Dublin pursues its objections through to the European Court of Justice will depend on the recommendation of the inspector, Chris McDonald, and the ultimate decision of Environment secretary John Gummer.

The Irish contend that the Environmental Impact Statement provided by Nirex is

deficient in confining itself to the interim underground laboratory rather than the ultimate full waste dump.

Most of the Irish case was presented by Eli Lauterpacht QC, a professor of international law, who described the laboratory project as a £500m "Trojan horse". The figure included some £240m already spent on investigations.

The professor said the burden lay with Nirex, and ultimately the British Government, to show there would be no contamination. Nirex's position was "rather the reverse", he said.

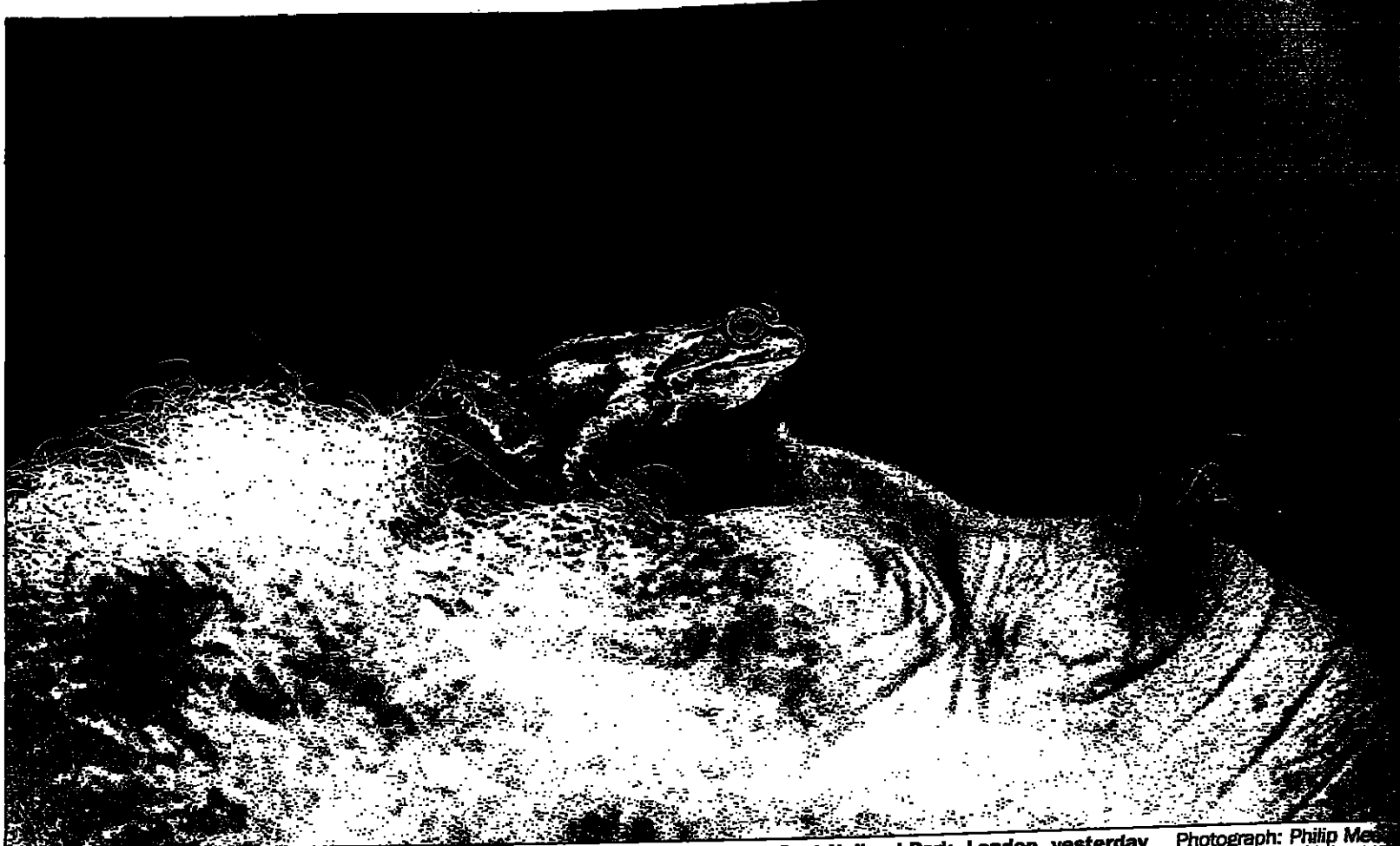
"The Irish Sea is seen as a safety device to disperse and dilute the radioactive substances."

After listening to the Irish case, Tom Curtin, head of corporate communications at Nirex, said that the company believed it had met all the requirements of UK and international law. "Much of the Irish case seems to be based on the presumption that the laboratory is a waste dump, which it is not. It is a stand-alone research facility," he insisted.

"We can't know all the answers until we get down there."

The inquiry has been running since 5 September and is due to finish early in February.

Schools enrolled in a national Frogwatch



Frog-faced: The environmentalist David Bellamy doing his bit to launch Frogwatch at Holland Park, London, yesterday Photograph: Philip Me...

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

Britain's schoolchildren are being asked to join a scientific quest to find out why the nation's frogs and toads are in decline. They will be asked to gather accurate information on

the time when spawn, then tadpoles and finally froglets appear in their local ponds - and urged not to fall in themselves.

"Children can provide useful data," said Dr Fred Slater of the National Amphibian Survey, which will be scrutinising their returns. "There aren't many

who don't know what frog spawn is."

Frogwatch, launched by the environmentalist David Bellamy at Holland Park, in west London, yesterday, is being organised by Wildlife Watch - the young people's branch of the national network of County

Wildlife Trusts. Information packs are available from BHS department stores: the chain is sponsoring the survey.

There is mounting evidence that amphibian species are in world-wide decline, but scientists do not know why. Among their hypotheses are the spread

of new viruses, acid rain, habitat destruction and the absorption of harmful water pollutants such as pesticides through their thin skins, which they breathe through. The numbers of common frogs and common toads still run into millions but are falling fast.

Ministers in a flap over culling of ruddy ducks

IAN MACKINNON

Ministers were yesterday considering secret advice over the problem of Britain's ruddy duck population after an earlier report urged a large-scale extermination programme.

The proposed trial cull of the birds, which are threatening the rare Spanish white-headed duck, has been recommended by a government advisory group and would see hundreds of birds shot in the spring.

But confidential advice on the matter from English Nature, the Government's statutory advisory body on wildlife, has also been sent to the Department of the Environment.

John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, is still considering the next move despite reports that he had abandoned plans for the cull because of fears of a public outcry on the strength of English Nature's advice.

Ruddy ducks, a North American species which escaped into



The ruddy duck: Threat to white-headed birds

the countryside from captivity in the 1950s, have been flying to Andalusia, in Spain, and mating with the prized white-headed duck.

The hybrids are viewed by the Spanish and wildfowl protection groups as unwelcome interlopers and the ruddy duck is shot on sight in Spain.

Under pressure from the Spanish the Government in 1993 formed a ruddy duck working group, made up of

voluntary conservation organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and various civil service departments.

Research showed that it was necessary to control the British population of 3,500 birds if the white-headed ducks, which number just 19,000 world-wide, were to be saved.

Initial tests revealed that the most effective and cost-efficient way of tackling the problem was to shoot the birds, a proposition due to be tested in the West Midlands and Anglesey in the spring if the Government gives the go-ahead.

But a spokesman for the Department of Environment said that no decision had been taken and it would announce one "as soon as possible".

A spokesman for English Nature declined to disclose what advice they had given. "We have not had any decision from the Government as to whether any form of regional control trial will take place."

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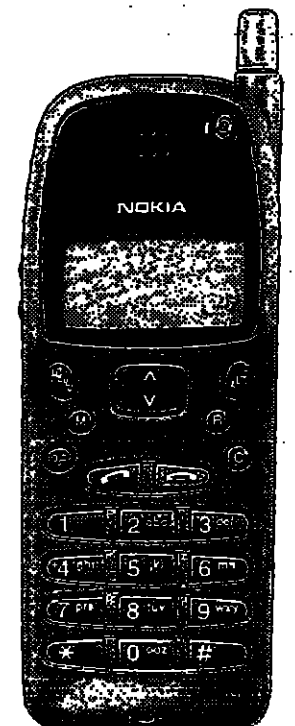
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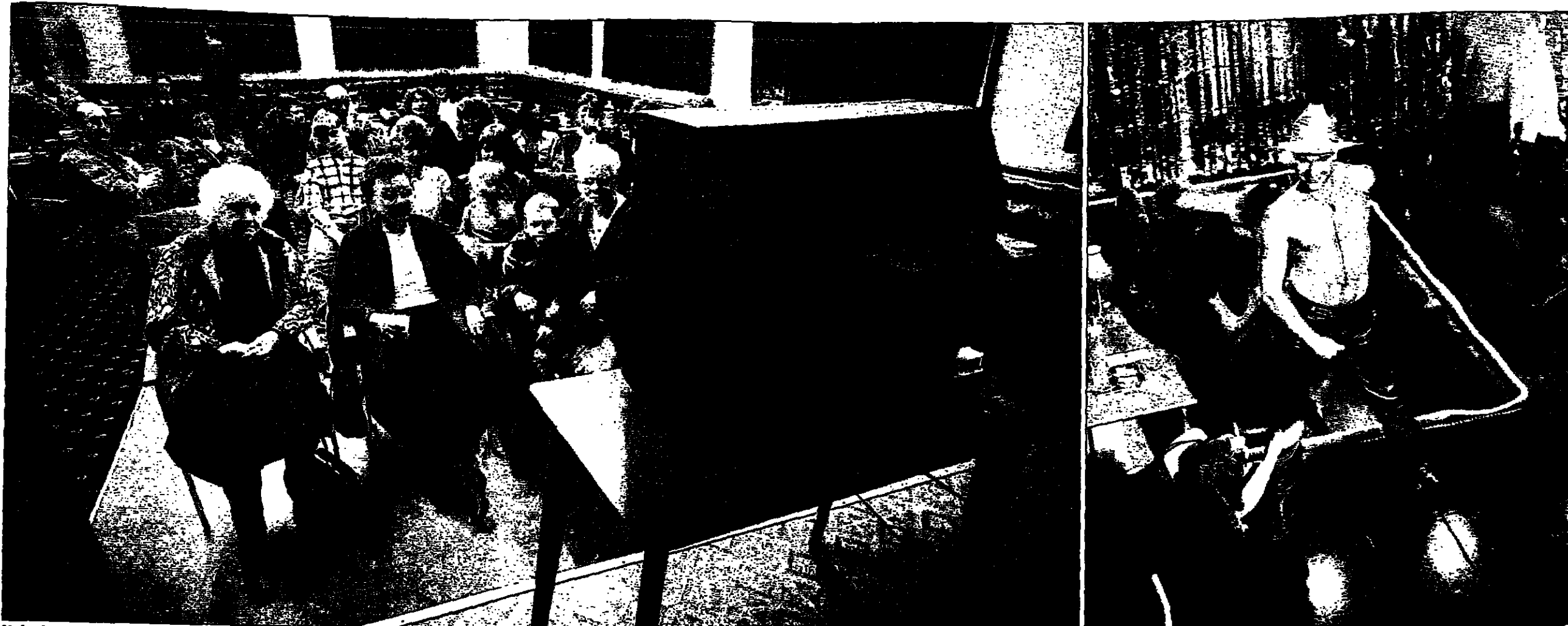
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Ex-miners bare all to strike a handsome seam



Naked ambition: Members of Gin Pit miners' welfare club enjoying *The Bare Necessities*, about ex-miners who form a stripper troupe (right), just as Rhyddian Lewis (below left) did seven years ago

Main photograph: Craig Easton



LOUISE JURY

The writer Ken Blakeson did not know it, but the plot for his latest comedy-drama was not as outrageous as it seemed.

In *The Bare Necessities*, to be screened on ITV tonight, five gritty northern miners find new careers as strippers when their pit closes down.

Uproarious scenes with screaming women relishing the troupe's finest efforts were filmed in the Astley and Tyldes-

ley miners' welfare club in Gin Pit village, near Manchester.

It was quite a coincidence. For seven years ago, Rhyddian Lewis was a good-looking local lad who had the idea first.

The son and grandson of miners, Rhyddian left school at 18 and went down Agescroft colliery at Salford, Manchester. Faced with redundancy after only two years at work, he decided to re-train but found it difficult to survive on a grant. A chance visit with a friend

to a nightclub proved an inspiration. "There were these guys called the Dream Boys strutting their stuff," Rhyddian said yesterday. "I'd never seen anything like it. I said to my friend, 'We can do that'."

The *Untouchables*, a five-man strippers troupe, were born. "We weren't really like the lads in the film. We weren't strippers, more like the Chippendales," Rhyddian said. Their risqué dance routines helped pay his way through col-

lege where he gained a diploma in horticulture. But his two and a half years on the stage gained him an Equity card, an agent and a new career on television and as a model.

He now earns in an hour what he used to earn in a week, and has travelled the world. It was what his coalface colleagues had always encouraged him to do. "They were always telling me to get out and go into modelling," he said. "Handsome" was how the

men and women at the Gin Pit club remembered him yesterday. "As fit as a butcher's dog," said Margaret Weir, a bar maid.

Settling down to a sneak preview of the drama, the club members agreed with Rhyddian that it captured something of a way of life that is disappearing. "It brought a lot of memories back about what pit villages used to be like," said Joe Goring, 50, a club trustee and miner for 26 years. "Lots of fun and laughter and tragedy."

Kevin Harris, a 33-year-old pipe fitter, added: "You could get five lads in here daft enough to do it, certainly."

Dorothy Sharratt, 68, whose home was turned over to the television crews for a week, thought the result "smashing". If they had done that here when people were being made redundant, they would have done better, wouldn't they?

There are no pits left in the area now. The last of the five collieries closed in 1993. The welfare club, founded in 1926, the year of the General Strike, once had 15,000 members but now has fewer than 1,000, though it remains the soul of the community. Rhyddian, now 27 and living in London, hated every moment of his work down the pit but was grateful for having grown up in such a community. "I'm very glad to have been a miner. I still have nightmares about the pit but I appreciate what I have now more," he said. "I know what graft is."

Injured officer questions safety of CS spray

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

A police training instructor who suffered 50 per cent burns from CS spray during trials has warned that it is not properly tested and could cause severe injuries to the public.

The comments by the Metropolitan Police inspector provides further ammunition for civil liberty groups who argue that not enough is known about the spray, which they believe could lead to deaths.

However, Chief Constables seem determined to press ahead with trials on the spray, which are expected to start among 2,500 officers from 18 forces as early as March. The move is a response to the increasing violent attacks against the police.

The injured inspector, who does not want to be named, told *Police Review* magazine: "It's obvious there's something wrong with the spray being trialled. I was subjected to a relatively small dose - less than would be used against a suspect in a real-life scenario."

"If I got burnt to my eyes and head from that amount, what could be the implications for

people who get more full in the face with their eyes open?"

During trials last June the officer was sprayed under controlled conditions for half a second - the recommended dose. He suffered 50 per cent burns to the cornea of one eye, 40 per cent to the other and burns to his forehead. He was taken to hospital after he collapsed and was in severe pain for several hours. His eyes were covered with patches for five days to allow the burns to heal.

He argued: "Whenever this issue comes up people say I suffered an allergic reaction. Well that's just not true - I was burnt. Since the incident I have not been contacted for an examination to see if I am someone who is more or less susceptible to this sort of reaction. That is pitiful and unprofessional. There is nothing in my physical make-up to make me prone to this."

He said the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) "rushed" to get the trials started and added: "The spray used on me was clearly not suitable." It is unclear whether he intends to take legal action, although he is keen that further

research is carried out so that colleagues can be provided with the hand-held canisters, which have a range of about 3ft.

Following his experience, planned trials in 18 forces were halted; however, further police research has concluded that incorrect aftercare was primarily at fault rather than the CS itself. Acpo is therefore almost certain to give the go-ahead to new trials in more than one-third of the forces in England and Wales when it meets next week. The Home Office has already given its support.

CS is a white powder that is mixed with aerosol spray and affects the mucous-secreting areas of the face, causing watering eyes, sneezing, and coughing.

The police inspector also suggested that because of the long after-effects of the spray a suspect could not be questioned for some time once they were arrested. "I suffered shock, and it would have been a nightmare for our procedures if a prisoner was suffering to the extent I was, I am concerned that officers should have the proper equipment to protect themselves. But it must be thoroughly researched," he said.

Bed crisis could split NHS, Labour says

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

Labour stepped up pressure on the Government yesterday to act on emergency hospital admissions, claiming that the crisis would split the NHS.

Harriet Harman, Labour's spokeswoman on health, said that more than one in six NHS acute beds had been cut since 1990 and that 7,664 beds were cut in England last year alone. In the past 15 years the number of NHS acute hospital beds had fallen by 28 per cent, while private beds had increased by 66 per cent, Ms Harman said. The worst-hit areas were South Thames and West Midlands, where one in five beds had been cut since 1990.

The British Medical Association had earlier called on the Government to rectify the "severe and prolonged bed crisis in

the acute sector". The association has anecdotal evidence from around Britain showing that GPs cannot get seriously ill patients into hospital, while casualty departments - which are suffering severe staff shortages - are running at capacity. Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, has admitted in the Commons that the situation was a "matter for concern".

Ms Harman said: "The circumstances the BMA described will drive a further wedge of unfairness into the health service and accelerate the development of a two-tier system."

She warned that unless prompt action was taken hospitals would start opening their doors only to emergency cases and the patients of GP fund-holders who could pay up front for care. At the same time, more patients would go private.

Labour is calling on the Government to require hospitals to give priority to patients on their clinical need and not on the basis of who was purchasing their care. This would mean amending an NHS Executive letter from June 1991 allowing preferential treatment for patients of GP fund-holders in non-urgent cases. If Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health, refused to issue a new letter, the Labour Party would draw up its own guidance circular and distribute it to hospitals, she said.

Examples of preferential treatment included King's College hospital, in south London, which had held extra sessions for fund-holding practices last year, and Finsbury Hospitals NHS Trust, in West Yorkshire, which had screened orthopaedic patients on the basis of whether they were from fund-holding practices, she said.

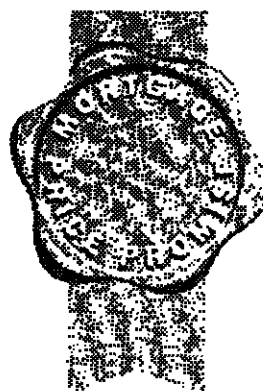
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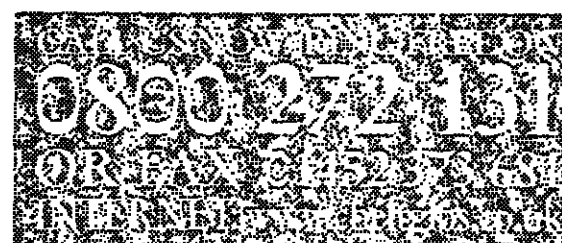
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Art forger's death in Rome a mystery

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

Eric Hebborn, the English art forger whose work made fools out of dozens of eminent experts and world-ranking galleries in the Sixties and Seventies, became the centre of a sensation of rather different kind yesterday as Italian police launched an investigation into his mysterious death ear-

lier this week from a brain haemorrhage.

Hebborn, who was 61, was found lying on the ground with a fractured skull in the early hours of Wednesday morning, following an evening spent drinking with friends near his home in the Trastevere district of central Rome. Despite attempts by doctors to resuscitate him at a number of hospitals, he was reported to have eventual-

ly died from internal bleeding on Thursday morning.

The police said yesterday that they were not sure if Hebborn had fallen by himself or had been attacked. They were waiting for the results of a post-mortem examination to decide whether to open a murder inquiry.

Hebborn had lived in Italy for more than 30 years, dividing his time between a loft in Traste-

vere and a well-appointed country house in Anticoli Corrado not far from Rome. Having trained as a painter and art restorer, his speciality was either copying or emulating such greats as Piranesi, Picasso, Gainsborough and Van Dyck.

So accomplished did he become that hundreds of his works made their way into public galleries and private collections as supposed Old Masters,

often fooling world experts on particular painters along the way. He claimed his work had made it into the British Museum in London, the New York Metropolitan Museum and the National Gallery in Washington.

Even after he was unmasked in 1979, Hebborn continued to work lucratively, and also wrote an autobiography, *Drawn to Trouble: Confessions of a Master Forger* along the way.

"Sometimes his work was more beautiful than the original," said Roberto Conforti, head of the Italian police division responsible for the country's artistic heritage and an unabashed fan. "He never gave us any trouble. He used to say: 'Others paint nature, I paint art'."

Instantly recognisable in the street, with his shaggy dark hair and full beard, Hebborn, a

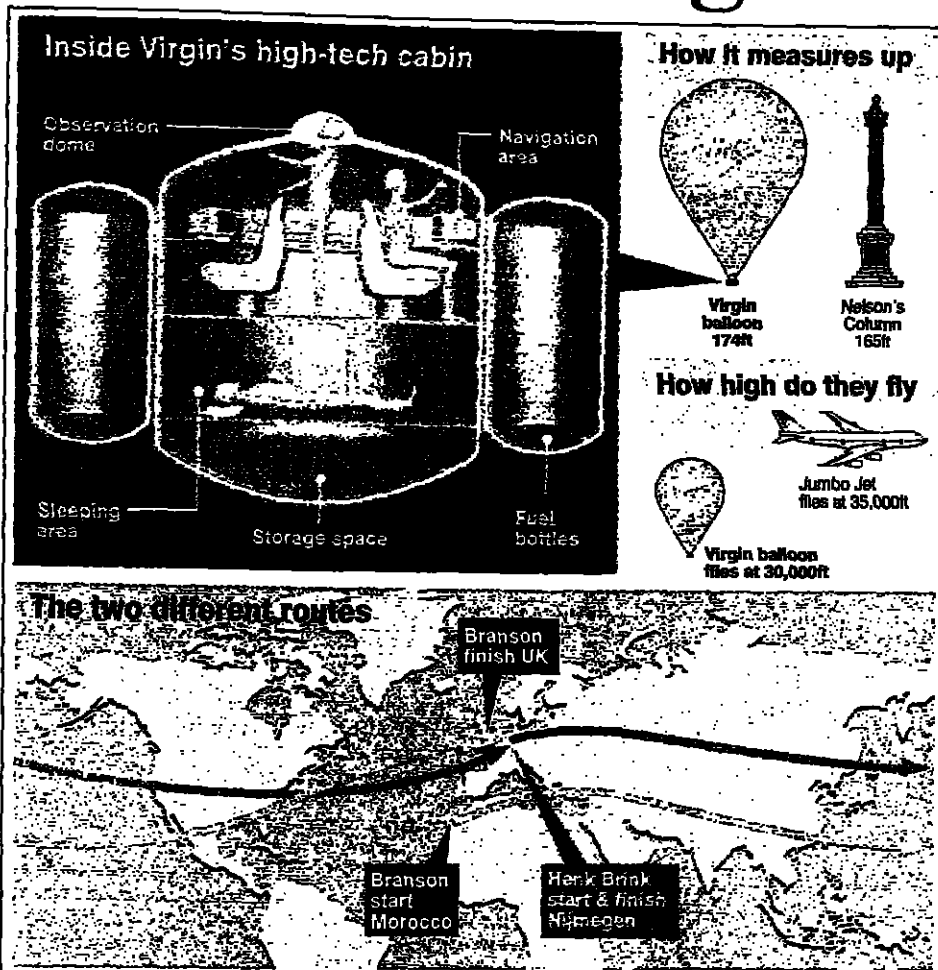
homosexual, was also an unabashed hedonist with a taste for good food and good Italian wine.

Hebborn did not appear to have been mugged since his wallet and credit cards were still on him when he was taken to hospital. One possibility is that he had suffered a stroke. He was known to be in indifferent health at the time of his death. *Obituary, page 14*



Eric Hebborn: Unmasked as art forger in 1979

Branson sets sights on breaking last great aviation record



JOHN MCKIE

Richard Branson, the Virgin chief, is this weekend finalising his preparations for a race to claim the accolade of being the first to circumnavigate the world propelled only by the winds.

But he may be beaten to his latest world record attempt by a Dutch helicopter pilot.

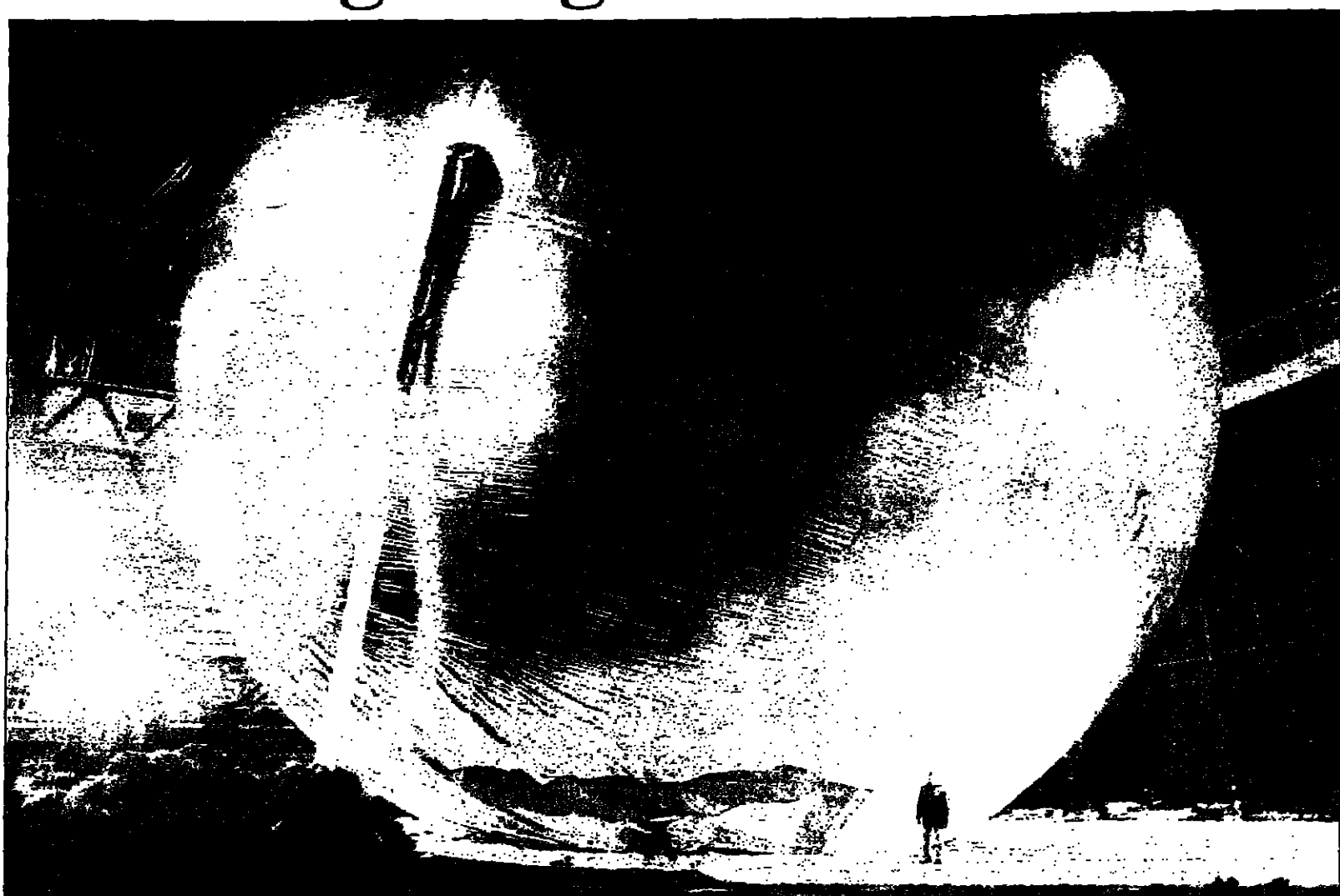
On Wednesday, Mr Branson, the balloonist Per Lindstrand and a business partner, Rory

McCarthy, will set off from Marrakesh, Morocco, in a round-the-world attempt to break the last great aviation record. In the *Virgin Global Challenger* balloon, they plan to circumnavigate the globe in 18 days.

But Henk Brink, 52, may beat them to it. The Dutchman is planning a global flight in the high-tech *Unicef Flyer* balloon in an attempt described as "very serious" by the Branson camp. Both he and Mr Branson

have done their homework. Both balloons will be fully heated and pressurised allowing access to the 100mph jet streams required to travel.

The two balloons have both been designed by Mr Branson's co-pilot Per Lindstrand. Mr Brink is leaving from the Dutch town of Nijmegen, some time next week, he hopes. A spokesman said: "It is very likely we will have the right conditions next week. Henk will do his utmost to get away first."



Testing time: The Virgin balloon undergoing trials at the Cammell Laird shipyard before Richard Branson's record attempt. Photograph: Mercury Press Agency

Mr Branson's spokesman, Will Whitehorn said he initiated the flight after the challenge was laid down by Mr Brink. "Richard's very much hoping it will be a race," he said.

Mr Whitehorn added that the *Challenger* stood to win the race because of the calmer

ground conditions in Marrakesh, and a strong jet stream of 30,000 feet. The 174ft balloon has a unique balloon envelope combined from nylon and Melinex - the silver metallised plastic found on the inside of some crisp packets. Melinex helps to keep the balloon warm

at night and cool during the day. The *Challenger* will be carried only by the winds 30,000 feet up.

The 35-tonne balloon was being flown yesterday from Cammell Laird shipyard on Merseyside to Morocco in preparation for Wednesday's departure. Mr Branson has also

enlisted heavyweight back-up for the venture. British Aerospace has lent him a transport aircraft in case of emergencies and Rolls-Royce engineers in Derby successfully tested the engine for the balloon's life-support system in November. Whatever the outcome, nei-

ther camp has to worry about an American rival, Steve Fossett, who set off from South Dakota on Monday only to limp back to Canada after crash-landing over the Atlantic, 100 miles into the journey. But for Mr Branson, Mr Brink represents a more serious threat.

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Battle to hold show fit for the millennium



Field of dreams: Development of the Greenwich site would have to start from scratch Photograph: Philip Meech

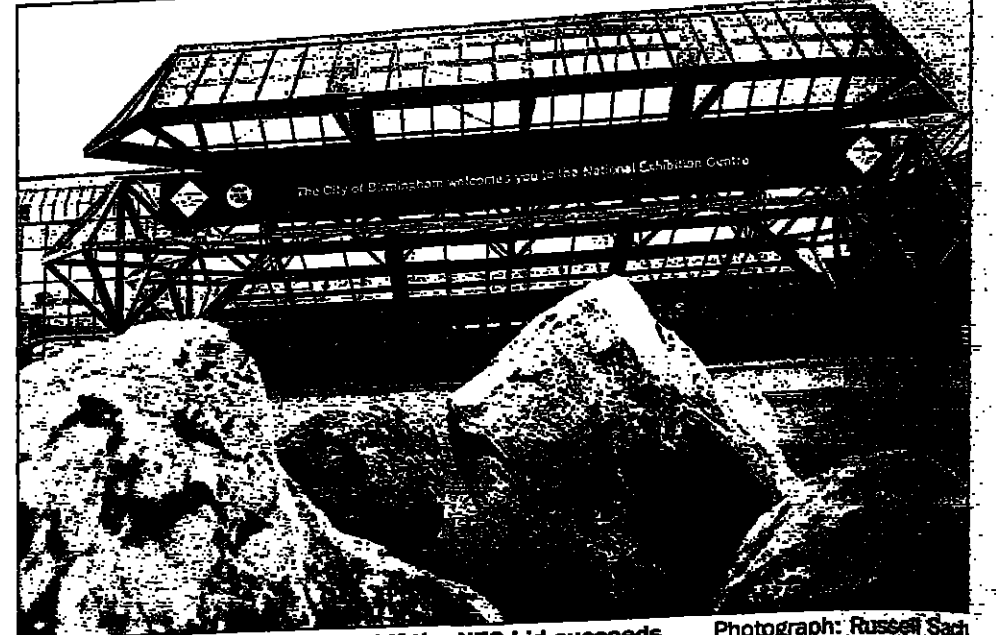
REBECCA FOWLER

The winner of the fierce competition to host the Millennium Exhibition, an attempt to celebrate the year 2000 with a grand project worthy of the Victorians, will be chosen next week.

The front-runners have emerged as Greenwich and Birmingham in a battle between London and the regions. They are locked in rivalry for the contract for the year-long event, which could cost up to £200m and will be partly supported by lottery money from the Millennium Commission.

As Britain celebrates the dawn of the new millennium, the exhibition is expected to attract up to 50 million visitors. So far it has emerged as the most ambitious in the world, with the exception of that put forward by the Vatican City, to celebrate the first 2,000 years of Christianity.

The bidders hope to confound critics of the project, who claim it will be an embarrassing shadow of the Great Exhibition of 1851, at Crystal Palace, where the Victorians flaunted the nation's imperial wealth. David Mellor, the former Secretary of State for National Heritage, said from the outset that the Millennium



Existing facilities would be used if the NEC bid succeeds Photograph: Russell Sand

Commission was a "great British disaster in the making." According to supporters of the bid from Greenwich - which is sited on the Meridian - the capital city is the natural home for the celebrations. "The historical resonance of the 1851 exhibition and the Festival of Britain in 1951, which both happened in London, are very

strong, and it is still one of the world's great cities," said Andrew Parry, project manager for the site.

A powerful consortium, including the M&A Group, led by Lord Hollick, which is part of the successful Channel Five television franchise bid, and M2000, headed by Touche Ross, the management consultancy, is bidding to operate the Greenwich site on the River Thames, in a derelict area beside the Blackwall Tunnel. It is also understood to have the support of Michael Heseltine, a supporter of the redevelopment of east London, who also sits on the Millennium Commission.

The 130-acre site, owned by British Gas, would create 10,000 jobs, according to the backers, and would bring the Thames back to life. They plan to transport visitors by river, as well as by road and rail. The exhibition bids were submitted to the Millennium Commission last summer. Headed by Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, the commission

will meet this week to make a decision.

Birmingham has the support of lottery critics, who say too much money has gone to the capital. A London-based design company, Imagination, proposes to operate the 40-acre site around the existing National Exhibition Centre, and has secured a pledge of £50m investment from the local authority.

The plan incorporates new buildings and parking facilities for more than 50,000 cars. It would divide the site into different zones, for exhibitions, entertainment and ecology. "As the only site with the proven expertise, existing infrastructure, capability and commitment to stage an event worthy of the millennium, we are ready and waiting," said the NEC chairman, Robert Burman.

The commission has invited operators to make their plans transferable to other sites if necessary. Derby's Pride Park and Stratford, in east London - which have also submitted bids - have not been ruled out.

How the bids compare

BIRMINGHAM Strengths	GREENWICH Strengths
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Primakov soothes West but looks east

HELEN WOMACK
Moscow

Russia's new Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, yesterday gave a finely-balanced performance at his first meeting with the press since President Boris Yeltsin appointed him to replace Andrei Kozyrev.

Russia was a "great power" and he would make it his priority to serve its interests, he said in comments likely to warm the hearts of Communists and nationalists who criticised Mr Kozyrev for being too compliant towards the West. But Mr Primakov went on to say that friendly ties with the West need not suffer because of this and certainly there would be no return to Cold War hostility.

"We are a great power and our policy must reflect our status," Mr Primakov told the packed press conference. "I consider it my main task to step up the Foreign Ministry's work in defending Russia's national interests. But I don't think that will contradict the development of ties with the United States."

While continuing to co-operate with the West, Russia would pay attention to relations with important neighbours to the East, such as China and Japan, and with traditional partners in the Middle East, which have lapsed somewhat since the collapse of Communism.

Moscow also needed to strengthen ties with the "near abroad", the now-independent republics of the former Soviet Union, he said.

Russia would oppose the eastward expansion of Nato, he said - Moscow has already made it clear it does not want to see former Warsaw Pact states such as Poland and Hungary joining the Western alliance. But there would be no return to the Cold War, Mr Primakov assured the West.

Earlier this week, when introducing his new man to the Foreign Ministry, President Yeltsin said the West should concern itself not with the personalities of Russian politicians but with the country's policies - and there would be no change in Moscow's foreign policy.

Mr Primakov's comments

confirmed there was no U-turn now. The change towards a more assertive stance took place many months ago when Mr Kozyrev was still in office. Initially friendly to the West, Mr Kozyrev was using more nationalistic rhetoric towards the end of his term.

The appointment of Mr Primakov, 66, was politely welcomed in Washington but privately US diplomats expressed concern, saying he was conservative. Such labels are, however, misleading in today's Russia and whether Mr Primakov will turn out to be more conservative than Mr Kozyrev remains to be seen. In any case, it is President Yeltsin who sets the country's foreign policy.



Primakov: Main task is to defend Russia's interests



Siege mentality: Russian troops manoeuvring a cannon into position outside the village of Pervomayskoye where Chechen rebels are still holding out

Photograph: AFP

Chechen rebels free 8 hostages

PHIL REEVES
Pervomayskoye

The stand-off between Russian forces and a band of Chechen rebels holed up in a border village in Dagestan eased last night with claims by the authorities that the besieged separatists had released eight hostages.

It marked the first breakthrough in the three-day deadlock in which the Chechens and more than 100 of their captives have been surrounded in the village of Pervomayskoye by tanks and heavy artillery of the Russian army.

The rebels had said earlier they were prepared to release 30 women and children in exchange for being guaranteed safe passage into Chechnya. However, it was unclear how many women and children were

among the hostages: the Itar-Tass news agency put the number at 26 yesterday before any were released.

The rebels were also said to have offered to release all their hostages on condition that they are accompanied on their journey back to Chechnya by a handful of notable Russian politicians - including Grigory Yavlinsky and General Alexander Lebed, both presidential candidates, and the reformer Yegor Gaidar. Mr Yavlinsky and Mr Gaidar apparently agreed but not Gen Lebed.

This glimmer of hope - albeit faint - concluded another day of tension in this remote patch of southern Russia, where many are turning over the Chechens' decision to cross the border of their breakaway republic, enter the Dagestan town of Kizlyar on Tuesday, and corral 2,000

hostages inside a hospital. Yesterday Russian helicopter gunships continued to swoop menacingly over the Chechens and their remaining captives - who include 37 Ministry of Interior policemen - as the Russian Army manoeuvred its tanks and heavy guns around the dead flat, frozen landscape.

The Russians have tightened security around the besieged village after several correspondents, including the *Independent*, walked in on Thursday and interviewed Salman Raduyev, the rebels' leader.

In Sovietskoye, the nearest village, an armoured vehicle blocked the road leading to the rebels' stronghold, much to the irritation of about 100 Dagestani men who had assembled at the edge of this potential battleground both out of curiosity and to rail against the rebels.

They were quick to point out that they have played host to tens of thousands of Chechen refugees who have fled from their homeland to this impoverished Russian republic over the last year to escape Chechnya's nasty little war. That Chechens should now be holding their Islamic neighbours hostage is seen here as tantamount to treason.

At the tiny farming village's edge hangs a Soviet-era sign bearing a picture of Lenin. The motif says: "Dearest of all to us is the preservation of peace". If the local people, the Avars, ever believed this sentiment - and in the troubled Caucasus that seems unlikely - then their faith has now been shattered.

Yesterday the women and children of Sovietskoye were evacuated on the orders of local elders who feared they could

be caught in stray fire from Chechen rebels or Russian guns. They were despatched to stay with relatives, leaving their men to wander bewildered among the cattle, geese and chickens who rule the muddy lanes. From time to time, deep booms rumbled across the landscape - evidence that the Russians have yet to fire of bombing Chechens over the nearby border.

Nor are the Avars the only ones among Dagestan's jumble of peoples to be damaged by this crisis. Chechens living in Dagestan have condemned the hostage-taking as an act of terrorism. They held a meeting in Khasavyurt, a town 10 miles from the scene of the crisis, and decided to despatch two busloads of Chechen men and women as volunteers to replace the hostages.

It is an offer that Mr Raduyev and his men seem certain to refuse, if they are ever offered the opportunity to consider it. The Russians have shown little compunction in attacking Chechen civilians in the past.

"I am 100 per cent certain that if the hostages are Chechens the Russian authorities will utterly destroy them," said Zaidi Abiyev, the editor of Khasavyurt's Chechen-language newspaper.

In Moscow, Sergei Medvedev, the spokesman for President Boris Yeltsin, said the Kremlin leader was being fully briefed. "Yeltsin receives hourly reports," Mr Medvedev said. "All developments are immediately reported to him." Mr Yeltsin faces a difficult decision over whether to use force to end a crisis that could affect his hopes of re-election in June.

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Mass grave in Bosnia may hold 8,000 bodies

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

British forces in Bosnia were last night keeping an eye on a vast, waterlogged open-cast iron ore mine in north-west Bosnia after allegations that thousands of bodies might be buried there.

The British troops, responsible for the area under Nato's Implementation Force (I-For), have contacted the international war crimes tribunal representative in Sarajevo.

The tribunal is to send a team to investigate the mine at Ljubija, south-west of Prijedor, "in the near future". But although the British troops will report anything they find to him, they said yesterday their job is to keep the warring sides apart, not to go looking for war crimes or war criminals.

Ljubija is in Serb-held territory which will remain Serb under the Dayton peace deal.

suggesting any bodies found there are those of Muslims or Croats. It is now the base for the 2nd Battalion, the Light Infantry, which may have to guard the war crimes team if local Serbs oppose an investigation.

A report in the *New York Times* yesterday quoted a British officer as saying that troops in the region often come across bodies.

Zvonimir Citek, of the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, said: "There were a lot of killings in Ljubija. We think there may be as many as 8,000 bodies in the mine. We have eyewitness testimony from people who saw the bodies. On top of the bodies they dumped lime. This is probably the largest mass grave in Serb-held Bosnia."

A spokesman at the British headquarters in Gorzki Vakuf said: "We are investigating this report," but he added: "We

are reminding people that our first aim is to deal with the military aspects of the cease-fire."

Ljubija lies close to the front line reached by Croat and Muslim forces during their rapid advance in September, which led directly to the Dayton agreement. The report of large numbers of bodies in the mine almost certainly refers to people killed in the summer of 1992. There were persistent reports at the time of bodies being dropped down mineshafts.

In Geneva an official of the war crimes tribunal said it has long been aware of allegations that Bosnian Serbs have been hiding bodies in mineshafts. The deputy prosecutor, Graham Elewitt, said the tribunal believed gaining access to this region was one of its main priorities.

Mr Elewitt said Serbia was not co-operating with the tribunal despite a pledge to do so.

If it did not, he warned, the tribunal could complain to the UN Security Council that Belgrade was in "non-compliance" with the agreement, which diplomats say could be grounds for reimposing UN sanctions.

The British units in the area are patrolling both sides of the former front line, and negotiating with the local forces to get them to withdraw from the 4km "zone of separation". Part of the area patrolled by the British is now held by Bosnian Croats, but is to be handed back to the Bosnian Serbs.

■ Sarajevo—Bosnian Serbs lifted a threat to flee Sarajevo yesterday despite a rejection by the Nato secretary-general, Javier Solana, of their plea to delay the transfer of their suburbs to the government. About 70,000 Serbs were said to be ready to evacuate the city and burn their houses unless Nato delayed the hand-over.



Long goodbye: Bosnian Serbs leaving the Sarajevo suburb of Ilidza before the government take-over Photograph by AP

Balkan war is test site for US hi-tech planes

The US is using the Nato operation in Bosnia to continue tests of a high-altitude surveillance aircraft which has not been used in action since the Gulf war five years ago, writes Christopher Bellamy.

The device may be used to monitor the withdrawal of troops from areas to be handed over under the Dayton peace plan.

The Joint Surveillance Target and Attack Radar System, or "Jstars", produced the spectacular radar images of the Gulf war battlefield which showed Iraqi forces streaming northwards towards the Euphrates, the first time a great battle unfolding had been captured in entirety in pictures.

The US is continuing to test two Jstars planes over the much more difficult landscape of Bosnia, with its steep valleys, mountains and forest, the ultimate test of the system.

The use of Jstars over Bosnia has another potential advantage. The US has been trying to sell Jstars to Nato for years. Using Jstars over Bosnia as part of the Nato operation, Joint Endeavour, will be a strong selling point.

The alternatives are a British system, called Astor (Airborne Stand-Off Radar), the French Horizon, or the Italian Cresco. Jstars and Astor are the only systems capable of monitoring an entire theatre of operations.

Astor will be more advanced but is not yet even in the development phase.

Jstars would be used to monitor "vehicle-type movements" in Bosnia. Under the Dayton agreement, Bosnian Serb, Muslim and Croat forces are to withdraw from areas to be transferred to other parties by 3 February. The new owners are to occupy them by 20 March.

Jstars can look out to a range of 200 nautical miles, so it can stay outside the range of surface-to-air missiles. It even has a memory to keep track of strings of vehicles and wait for them to reappear out of a valley or from behind a mountain.

"If a convoy disappears it will alert you," a Northrop Grumman official said. "It has a memory. It knows where to look." Two of the E-8 Jstars aircraft—converted Boeing 707s—left the testing grounds of Northrop-Grumman in Melbourne, Florida, for Bosnia on 14 December. The US Air Force has a requirement for 20 Jstars systems, to be bought over the next 10 years at a total cost of \$5bn (£3.2bn) to \$7bn.

Jstars can receive pictures from E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (Awacs) aircraft. Jstars will therefore be used to home in on contacts, for example, helicopter, flights picked up by Awacs, as well as for closer analysis of events on the ground.

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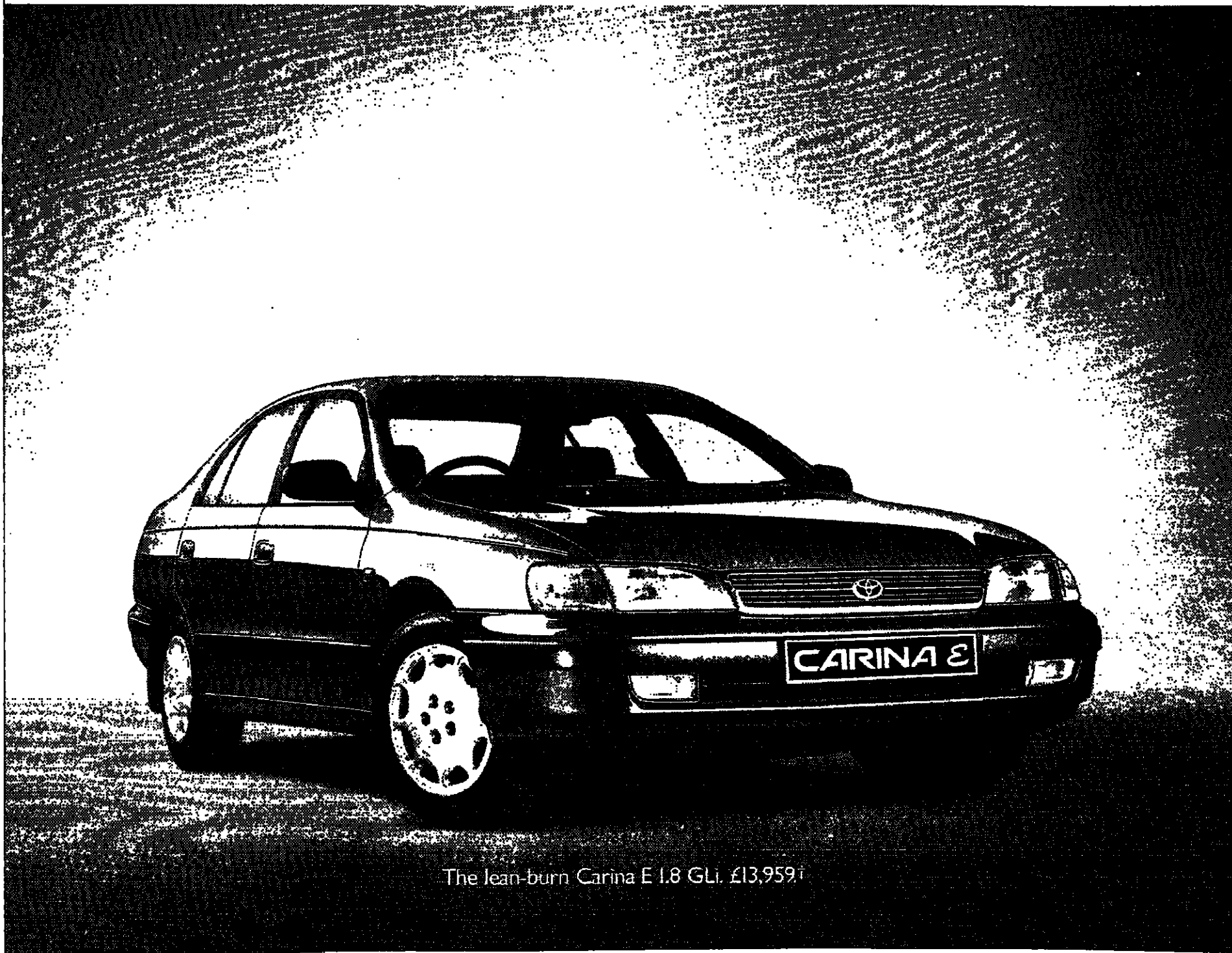
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Italy faces early poll as Dini finally resigns

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

Italy was plunged into a hazardous and uncertain government crisis yesterday after the resignation of Lamberto Dini and his team of technocratic ministers. Mr Dini reluctantly handed in his resignation as Prime Minister on Thursday night, having failed to persuade a fractious parliament to let him stay while it mapped out a smooth path to take Italy through its six-month presidency of the European Union and prepare calmly for a general election.

Although he acknowledged that his government's limited mandate was over, Mr Dini warned fervently against a "crisis in the dark". After three days of fruitless debate in the Chamber of Deputies, though, a crisis in the dark is exactly what Italy now has to face.

On Monday, President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro will begin exploratory talks with the speaker

during their recent presidencies. Is there any prospect of salvaging the mess? If a new government can be formed, the most likely scenario is another Dini-led administration, but this time with "political" ministers drawn from all sides with a mandate to carry out institutional reforms. These would include a new electoral law more likely to produce a workable governing majority when the country next goes to the polls.

The chances of finding the cross-party agreement needed for such a government, though, seem dim indeed. Italy has never managed to pass a single amendment to its 1948 constitution despite several abortive attempts. Moreover, the aims of the country's two main political blocks are diametrically opposed: the centre-left simply wants to introduce a two-round voting system, while the centre-right wants to transform the country's whole style of government and invest far greater powers in the prime minister.

Italy's inability to stabilise its political system has become a spectacle veering between tragedy and high farce. Ever since the collapse of the old Christian Democrat-led order in 1992, there have been endless promises of sweeping change but precious little evidence of it. The media magnate Silvio Berlusconi claimed to have founded a "Second Republic" when he swept to power in March 1994, but his incongruous conservative coalition, supported by former neo-fascists on one side and northern separatists on the other, collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions after just seven months.

Mr Dini's government, voted in one year ago, was supposed to be a stopgap giving the country time to rethink its political system once again. Although he proved a competent technician, making the first significant cuts for years in Italy's runaway public deficit, the very longevity of his government attested to the country's inability to find a way out of the impasse.

The present crisis – sparked by the death of postwar government number 54 – has all the hallmarks of the bad old days, when political instability allowed terrorism, organised crime and corruption to get the better of the system. The longest crisis ever, in 1979, lasted five months. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Italy could be about to break its own record.



Dini: In the end, he was reluctant to go

ers of the two houses of parliament and with leaders of all political parties to see if a new government with a coherent programme can somehow be cobbled together.

If the President fails, he will have no choice but to dissolve parliament and call elections – an option he and the centre-left have resisted because there is no guarantee that the political balance in a new parliament will be any clearer than in the present one.

This is exactly the kind of mess Italy had hoped to avoid at the beginning of its EU presidency. The crisis is almost certain still to be hanging over the country when it hosts the crucial Inter-Governmental Conference in March. And if there are elections, Italy will be continuing an inglorious tradition already experienced by France and Germany

Leftist set to succeed grand old 'king' of Portugal



Left's choice: Jorge Sampaio being carried by supporters at a presidential election rally

ELIZABETH NASH
Lisbon

The campaign for tomorrow's presidential elections has reflected the general mood of the Portuguese people: laid-back for the most part, interrupted by bursts of agitation. Torrential rainstorms, the worst in more than 60 years, have jolted people's lives more than the election campaign, though passions flared in the closing days.

All but two contenders pulled out of the race this week, so tomorrow will see a straight fight between the mild Socialist former mayor of Lisbon, Jorge Sampaio, and the conservative former prime minister, Anibal Cavaco Silva.

Mr Cavaco is better known, having led a 10-year conservative government before the Socialist election win last year. But Mr Sampaio is favourite to succeed Mario Soares, who bows out after the maximum 10 years as president during which he became Portugal's most loved and respected politician.

Should Mr Sampaio win, the Socialists would control the presidency, parliament and the big cities. He has been consistently ahead and the latest poll gives him the support of 53.1 per cent of voters, 13.2 per cent ahead of his rival (though an earlier poll put him only four points ahead).

Lisbon seems almost bare of election posters, in contrast to the hectic campaign of last October when a Socialist victory marked a political turn-around. Sceptics point out that the government has delayed an-

nouncing a stringent budget until tomorrow's contest is out of the way, to give Mr Sampaio a fair wind.

The presidency is more than just ceremonial. The president can dissolve parliament if the government runs into difficulties, an important consideration with the Socialists four votes short of an overall majority, and can delay legislation.

The post is non-partisan; the Socialist Mr Soares succeeded so brilliantly in recycling himself as leader of all Portuguese that he is affectionately dubbed "The King".

The two candidates cannot, therefore, offer policy options. Mr Cavaco went so far as to hand in his Social Democratic Party card. They can only undertake a charm offensive to convince voters of their personal suitability. Neither is particularly charismatic, but as one observer noted yesterday: "Sampaio is more enigmatic, so people have less against him."

But party politicking is barely veiled. Mr Sampaio, while urging consensus, says a new age has dawned and suggests that voters have already thrown out everything Mr Cavaco represents. Mr Cavaco stresses his experience and his Catholicism – swipes at Mr Sampaio, who has never held national office and is both atheist and Jewish.

Mr Cavaco's message and his austere manner go down well in the conservative, Catholic northern part of the country. But they seem at odds with a broad trend towards moderate change, and Mr Sampaio's more easy-going style.

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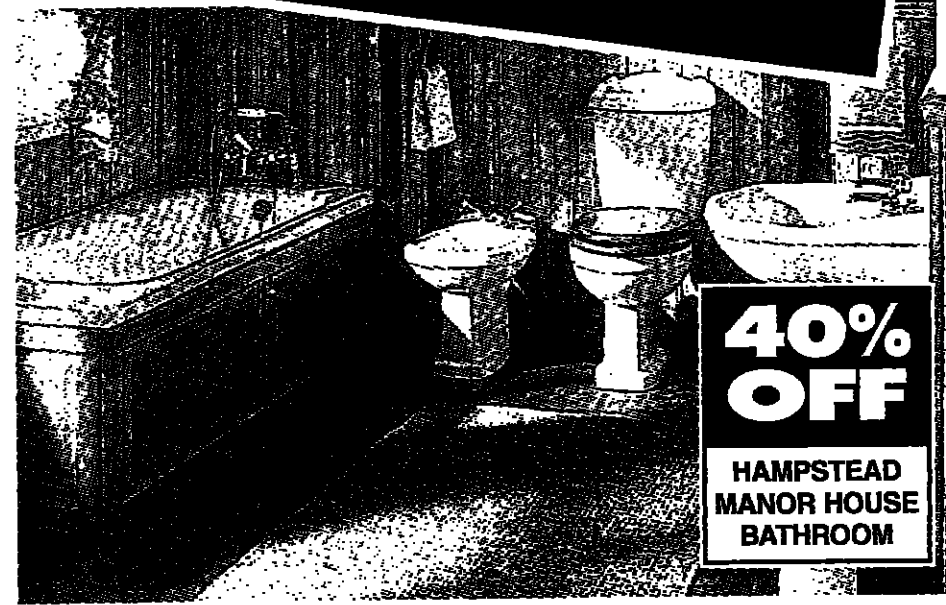
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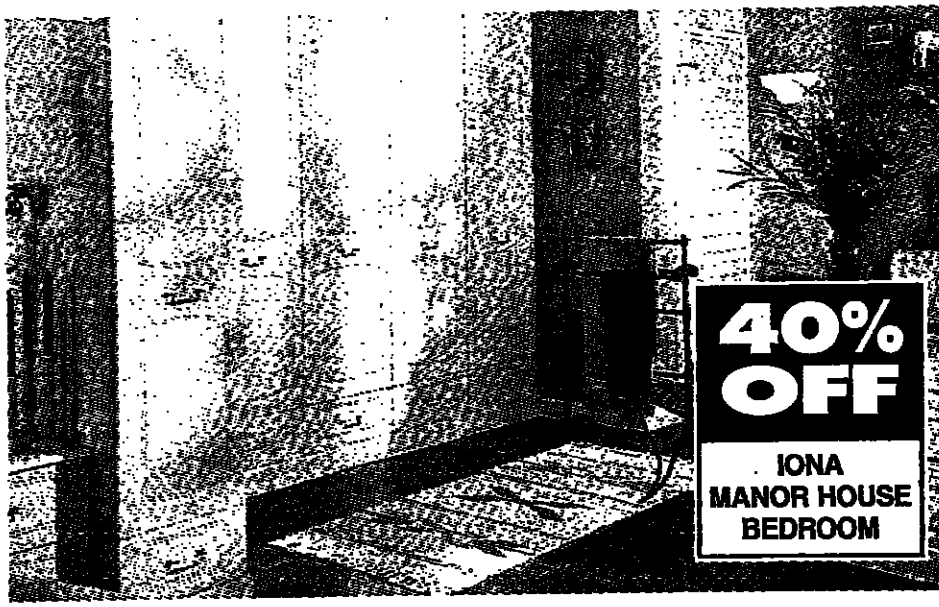
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Clintons' credit is good long-term bet

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

Mercifully, Bill Clinton has never been too concerned about money. Whitewater and the squalid Paula Jones sexual harassment suit are not only political and personal embarrassments for America's 42nd President. They are, on paper at least, bankrupting him.

Do the sums, like *Money Magazine* has done in its latest issue, and they are grim. When they came to office the Clintons had declared net assets of \$679,000 (now in a blind trust).

The couple do not own a proper home. Mr Clinton's salary as Arkansas Governor was only \$33,000 (£23,000) and in fact the main family breadwinner was Hillary Clinton, thanks to her partnership in the Rose law firm of Little Rock - and of course that mysterious £100,000 windfall on the cattle futures market in 1978 and 1979.

Now the First Family is embroiled on two legal fronts, for which the bill is currently estimated at \$2m, and climbing. The Clintons are not allowed to tap campaign or party funds. A legal defence fund was set up in

1994 to collect contributions. But it may not advertise or otherwise solicit for money, and it has thus far gathered only \$800,000.

Nor does a President's salary greatly help. Mr Clinton earns \$200,000 (\$130,000 after taxes) a year, while his wife receives nothing for being First Lady. She cannot work as a lawyer, while royalties from her new book on children, *It Takes a Village*, are going to charity. The job perks of course are huge - Ronald Reagan once described the White House as "an eight-star hotel" - but no one be-

comes rich there. If the Clintons' creditors called in their debts today, the President would be in queer street. On Thursday, he admitted that, on paper, he was heading for bankruptcy.

In fact, his financial predicament is nowhere near as bad as it looks. If the First Family were a listed company, a broker's advice to his client almost certainly would be: short-term prospects dicey, but in the long-term a pretty sure bet.

Take the legal bills. As is common in such cases, the firms representing the Clintons in Whitewater and for Mr Clinton

in the sexual harassment charge are not insisting on immediate settlement of their fees, running at \$350 to \$400 an hour for lead attorneys. That removes any risk of sudden bankruptcy.

Assuming neither the President nor the First Lady is indicted (and the special Whitewater prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, has indicated that on current evidence that is unlikely), the Clintons' legal costs for Whitewater should be reimbursed by the Government - in other words the taxpayer.

And whatever happens, life after the White House, starting

in 1997 or 2001, should be remunerative. Mrs Clinton, once voted one of America's 100 best lawyers, will be able to resume a lucrative legal career. As for her husband, his memoirs will be worth millions. Another fortune awaits on the lecture circuit, where speakers such as Colin Powell earn \$50,000 a time. Even if he wins a second term, he will be only 54 when he leaves office.

The real squeeze is on the smaller fry caught up in the Whitewater net, often merely out of loyalty to their masters. The President spoke of them at

his press conference this week, "the innocent people who don't have particularly high salaries and don't have the net worth that we brought here, who had to hire lawyers and pay legal fees too".

These individuals too should be reimbursed assuming they are not indicted. But that will not make good the strain and worry of a legal and public ordeal for which they are not responsible. Their salaries rarely exceed \$100,000 for even the most senior aides, and often are substantially less. And who will buy their memoirs?

Cocaine jailbreak stuns Bogota

PHIL DAVISON
Latin America Correspondent

Jose Santacruz Londono, alias "The Student" and alleged number three man in the Cali cocaine cartel, calmly unscrewed the one-way mirror from his prison interrogation room, climbed through into the empty viewing room and out to a waiting getaway vehicle in the prison yard.

The guards at Bogota's maximum security La Picota prison politely waved the vehicle through. Its occupants had earlier flashed identity documents from the Attorney-General's office, and a similar vehicle had brought bona-fide government interrogators to the jail earlier in the day.

Thursday's cool escape was the biggest setback for President Ernesto Samper since his police and troops detained Santacruz and five other alleged leaders of the Cali cartel in a three-month sweep last summer.

The smooth way in which Santacruz escaped almost at the moment a new Justice Minister, Carlos Medellin, was sworn in and was promising swift trials for the alleged cartel bosses, Colonel Norberto Pelaez, director of the national prison system, has resigned.

The escape could hardly have come at a worse time for Mr Samper, who has been accused by his former campaign manager of accepting cocaine money from the Cali cartel while campaigning in 1994. The President insists any such money came in without his knowledge but polls show most Colombians do not believe him.

Colombian police are offering a \$2m (£1.3m) reward for Santacruz's recapture.

California's right sells crown jewels

TIM CORNWELL
Los Angeles

Willie Brown, who ruled the California state assembly for 14 years, was crowned Democrat mayor of San Francisco this week. As choirs carolled at his inauguration ceremony and newspapers speculated which of his many Italian suits he would wear, Mr Brown, in a characteristic display of arm-twisting, persuaded 75 of the city's best restaurants to distribute free meals to the homeless.

In Sacramento, two hours' drive away, the Republicans, who now control the assembly for the first time in 25 years, were dismantling his former seat of power. The new Speaker, Curt Pringle, a former drapery salesman, said he would sell Mr Brown's Cadillac, "the three crown jewels of the imperial speakership", he would confine himself to a state-issued 1991 Dodge.

The Republicans won a slim victory a year ago but the irrepressible Mr Brown, even as he geared up for the San Francisco mayoral race, persuaded two moderate Republicans in succession to jilt their party and take the Speaker's chair themselves with Democrat support. Only when he left the scene could the Republicans unite and elect Mr Pringle to the second most powerful post in California after the governorship.

In San Francisco, Mr Brown

told President Bill Clinton, who had called from wintry Washington to congratulate him in front of cheering crowds: "You should be here with us today. It is just incredible. There is no snow and no Republicans."

The city is the centre of northern California's liberal Democratic heartland. Mr



Willie Brown: Former edifice of power is being dismantled

Brown, the son of a maid and a station porter and who is black, excelled at milking corporate political donors in his 31 years in the assembly.

Long divorced, he is reported to lead a romantic life, in keeping with his flamboyant persona. In post-election interviews Mr Pringle spoke of tightening divorce laws to strengthen the family. He hails from stretches of southern California in Orange County and

San Diego that are solidly conservative and mostly white and has an anti-government agenda of deregulation, tax cuts, school choice and an end to state-funded abortions.

Recent laws will make Mr Brown's reign impossible to repeat: Mr Pringle must leave office in two years' time.

The Republicans' first efforts included corporal punishment for graffiti vandals. A bill once blocked by Democrats but now passed out of committee would allow a judge to order a parent or bailiff to whack juveniles up to 10 times with a wooden paddle; teachers and civil-rights groups are furious.

Meanwhile, hundreds of bikers converged on the state capitol building as Republicans on their first day of business voted to repeal a law requiring helmets. Though the law was credited with cutting motorcycle deaths by 45 per cent, it was a personal-liberty issue dear to the party's right.

The Republicans won office on the first anniversary of Newt Gingrich's inauguration as Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington and, like him, they are intent on action after years in the wilderness. Though they must still deal with a Democrat-run state Senate, they dismissed an array of long-time committee staffers and brought former governor Ronald Reagan's portrait back to the Senate.



The godfather of soul, James Brown, with a friend at the funeral in Hollywood Hills of his wife, Adrienne, 47, who died while recuperating from cosmetic surgery. Among the mourners (right) was Little Richard. Photographs: AP



US spares Internet code-master

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

After three years' investigation, a US district attorney has decided not to prosecute Philip Zimmermann, who wrote a piece of encryption software now widely used in cyberspace to keep messages secret.

It is so effective that the US classifies it as a munition and bans its export without a licence, the penalty for which is a maximum jail term of 51 months.

Mr Zimmermann, to whom the decision was faxed on Monday, said he was "ecstatic". Internet users adopted his

program, Pretty Good Privacy (PGP), to make private messages and files uncrackable and to give their public messages a unique electronic "signature".

The decision could help US companies which have been urging the government to let them compete with rivals already selling encryption packages like PGP. Washington had resisted their calls but wide availability of a free uncrackable encryption program will make their case hard to deny.

Mr Zimmermann was never charged but had been under investigation since 1993 by Michael Yamaguchi, US district

attorney in San Francisco, after copies of PGP became widely available on the Internet.

It was copied to the Internet by a friend of Mr Zimmermann who sent it to computer bulletin boards from his laptop over public payphones. Almost simultaneously, it was rumoured that the US government would soon outlaw such "strong encryption". However, Mr Yamaguchi said he would not be prosecuting any individuals following the investigation.

PGP uses a technique that is easy to perform with a standard PC, yet impossible to crack with even the most powerful sys-

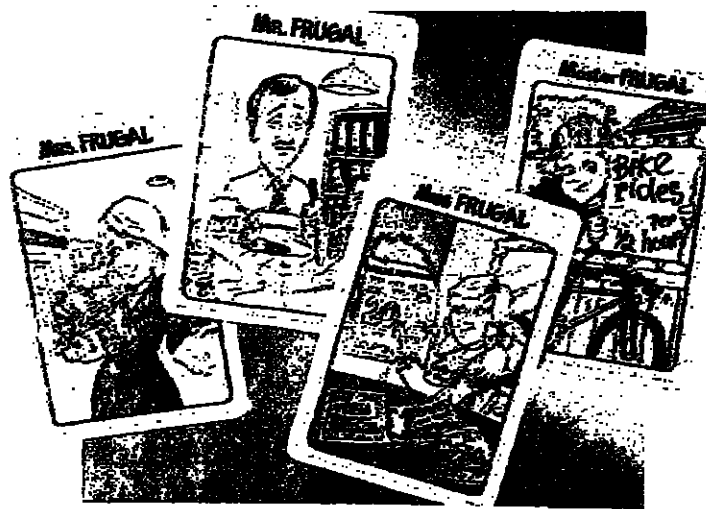
tems. It starts from two large prime numbers, which are used to produce the "public" and "private" keys. Each program user generates his or her own pair of keys and then makes the public key available to anyone. To encrypt a message the sender uses his private key and the receiver's public key.

The message can only be decrypted by the intended receiver. To an interceptor, such as a US government official, the content is a meaningless jumble of numbers. However, there have been claims that though PGP can have positive uses, it also appeals to criminals.



Santacruz: Through the mirror to freedom

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obituaries / gazette

Eric Hebborn

Eric Hebborn was the most successful art forger this century. By his own account he passed off some 1,000 paintings and drawings, predominantly Old Masters, to galleries worldwide ranging from the British Museum in London to the National Gallery in Washington, the Pierpont Morgan Gallery in New York and the National Museum in Copenhagen. Art experts and historians, the dealers Colnaghi's and the auctioneers Sotheby's and Christie's, the vehicles of his deception, were all taken in by his work.

It was not until 1978, 15 years after he had started on his forging career, that he was exposed, by the journalist Geraldine Norman. And it was not until 1991, when he published his teasing autobiography *Drawn to Trouble: the forging of an artist*, that Hebborn himself admitted to his history.

He was born in 1934, the son of a grocer's assistant, in South Kensington, London, but brought up, to his chagrin, in Essex. At the age of eight he burnt down his school and was sent to Borstal. He was then put to foster parents and at 15 won a place from Maldon Secondary School to Chelmsford Art School; from there he went to Walthamstow Art School, which made more of a speciality in painting, and in 1956 he graduated to the Royal Academy Art Schools, where he won the Silver Medal for painting and a Rome Scholarship in engraving, which took him to the British Academy in Rome for two years. Three years after leaving the academy schools, in 1963 he moved permanently to Italy. He had one-man shows of his own paintings in the 1970s and 1980s in Tivoli, Genoa, Hamburg, Manila and at the Alwin Gallery in London.

After the publication of *Drawn to Trouble*, he had shows of his paintings at the Julian Harnoll Gallery in London, and of his "fakes" at the Arches Gallery. He was the subject of a BBC *Omnibus* film and last year published in Mi-

lan, a book, *Il manuale del falsario* ("A Fakes Manual"), for which he was negotiating with an English publisher.

Eric Hebborn's autobiography, for a man not a practising writer, is as meticulously made as any of his Old Master drawings – and that ambiguity is intentional. He "adopted" my family (wife and three daughters) some 35 years ago, while living in Highbury, north London. At that time he was teaching at the Reigate and Redhill School of Art, and dealing in watercolours of the Norwich School. He became godfather to our youngest daughter. What he saw in such a family remains a mystery, unless he found in us a substitute for his own, then, long-lost siblings.

His greatest qualities were generosity, loyalty and – against all evidence – honesty. These qualities remained constant; whatever the defects or ups-and-

downs of those he knew. He was always a giver. And he regarded debt as a matter of honour – creditors (perhaps with the exception of lawyers) were always, eventually, paid.

Honesty, of course, is philosophically difficult to define. Hebborn's often-quoted dictum that attributions to his drawings were made by others – never by him – applied equally to his way of living. None who knew him well ever saw him dissemble: what you saw was what you got.

For some 30 years he was a resident of Anticoli Corrado, near Rome, where, to his unashamed delight, he was known, particularly in the village bars, as "Il Professore" ("It only means teacher," he said).

Earlier, following his Rome Scholarship, he lived in the gatehouse to the Villa Doria Pamphili in Rome, and in Via Giulia. He then rented the Vil-

la San Filippo, below the village of Anticoli, a few miles outside the city, on the road to Subiaco. This had been the home of many popes' gardeners.

Looking for somewhere more permanent he once showed me an abandoned barn in a wood beneath Anticoli (a village famous in Italy not only for its resident artists, but for its artists' models). "I'll make that my home," he said. Employing local builders and his own, then great, strength, he built Santa Maria, in Bosco di Ciabatta ("Slipper Wood"), where he was to spend all but the last few years of his life.

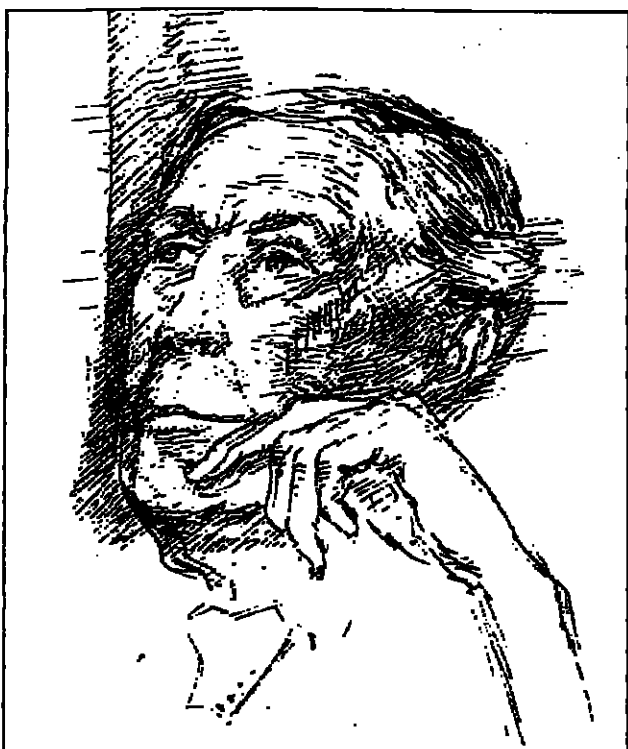
It was in Santa Maria that he began, for the first time in years, to create his own work – translating and illustrating the *Epic of Gilgamesh*; composing his autobiography; and painting. An exhibition of his watercolours of Tivoli and its environment at the Villa d'Este was not only a sell-out, but resulted in more commissions than he could accept.

As he aged – his beloved Chi-anti took its toll – he found travelling on foot (the only way) from Santa Maria to Anticoli an impossibility. So he left to live in an apartment in Piazza San Giovanni della Malva, in Trastevere, his spiritual home.

Hebborn was – and this comes out well in the autobiography – a remarkable raconteur. His tales pointed up to his phenomenal (if selective) memory, an ability which enabled him to assimilate, in time, Italian, Spanish – and Latin. He translated (and illustrated) Lorca and, over many years, the sonnets of Michelangelo and Giuseppe Belli. The latter, who wrote in the language of the ordinary Roman people, appealed particularly to one who saw no differences in humankind.

In response to his critics, he wrote: "I have never considered myself a misunderstood genius, or for that matter a genius at all. No one asked me to become an artist, and the world does not owe me a living."

Barry Cole



Pen-and-ink drawing by Hebborn of his friend Anthony Blunt, c.1979. Hebborn's good connections helped him in his deception.



What you saw was what you got: Hebborn in 1990

Photograph: B. Donatelli / Agenzia Contrasto

show them to experts. Hebborn's extraordinary success lay in deceiving the art historians themselves.

He didn't sell direct to museums. He put his Old Master drawings into Sotheby's and Christie's auctions and sold them to leading London dealers – who passed them on to museums. Before he was un-

masked, his drawings had been bought as genuine by the British Museum, the National Gallery, Washington, the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Museum of Copenhagen and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. That meant hoodwinking an awful lot of art historians.

It was obviously a help that everyone knew he was a friend of Professor Anthony Blunt, director of the Courtauld Institute, with whom he used to stay while in London. In the art world, people tend to be taken seriously if they are well connected. But Hebborn was also adept at hiding clues in his drawings. They would be related to a painting only reproduced in some exceptional obscure book; they would be inscribed with old attributions to the wrong artist; they would, of course, be executed on paper of the right period, produced in the right region of Europe...

Like Tom Keating, van

Meegeren and many other fakers, his prime motivation seems to have been resentment at his lack of recognition as an artist in his own right. By successfully deceiving experts he was able to tell himself that "they" knew nothing and were wrong to ignore his own work. Maybe he could also tell himself that he was just as good as the artists he imitated. In any case, he had a masterly understanding of art-historical bullsh*t; and he managed to leave many scholars with red faces.

Eric Hebborn, artist, sculptor, forger: born London 20 March 1934; died Rome 11 January 1996.

Professor Seton Lloyd

Seton Lloyd's long archaeological career began in 1929 in Egypt, moved to Iraq in 1930 where it continued throughout the Second World War and after, and in 1949 moved again to Turkey for 12 years. From 1962 to 1969 he was Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology at London University, and in his many years of retirement he remained active and involved until very lately. His knowledge of Near Eastern archaeology was unrivalled and survives in many meticulous academic publications as well as more readable works for a wider public.

Lloyd was born in 1902 into a substantial Quaker background of well-known names, whose family ramifications gave him widespread circles of kinsmen. He was educated at Uppingham and subsequently studied at the Architectural Association, qualifying in 1928. During this time he worked for two years as assistant to Sir Edwin Lutyens. This architectural training proved an invaluable resource in his subsequent career in archaeology, where his understanding of how buildings work gave him an unusual and special perspective.

His field career spanned a range of archaeological fashions, extending from the lavishly

funded American excavations of pre-war days to the shoestring but resourceful British excavations after the war. It reached up to the beginning of modern archaeology, heavily science-based and directed to maximum data retrieval. But Lloyd's style of painstaking and methodical excavation and publication strove towards an understanding of the past which is surely still valid.

In both Iraq and Turkey his name is associated with the breaking of new ground both in the location of sites and in the identification of cultures, and his successors have constantly found themselves walking in his footsteps. Among his contemporaries there were figures more extrovert and flamboyant than he, yet the record of work which he has bequeathed compares favourably with theirs.

The story of his colourful life is best told by himself in his memoirs, *The Interval*, published by him in retirement in 1986. His switch from architecture to archaeology was entirely fortuitous. In 1929 he replaced at the last minute a friend engaged as architectural advisor on the British excavation at El-Amarna in Egypt. This brought him into contact with Henri Frankfort, whom he always spoke of as a major in-

tellectual influence. Subsequently Frankfort, commissioned by the Oriental Institute, Chicago, to undertake excavations on the Diyala river in Iraq, persuaded Lloyd to join his team. After his initial task of building and equipping the palatial excavation house in the middle of nowhere, Lloyd played a prominent part in those enormously productive operations, running from 1930 to 1937, and in the substantial publications which flowed from them.

Work on John Garstang's excavations at Mersin in 1937 and 1938 gave Lloyd his first taste of Turkey, and he then took the opportunity to make the difficult journey through south-east Turkey to northern Iraq, where he conducted the very important Sinjar survey.

He was then offered the post of Archaeological Adviser to the Directorate of Antiquities in Baghdad, which he took up in 1939. This had the unforeseeable consequence that he spent the war largely in Iraq, and was fully caught up in the dramatic political events there, the pro-Nazi coup and the British counter-strike and occupation. In the intervals between these events he was able to conduct some notable research, principally the excavation of the painted temple at Uqair and later of Tell

Hassana, where he identified a new culture – and the earliest known – in Iraq. In 1943 he met Ulrica Hyde ("Hydie"), whom he married the following year.

Continuing in his Baghdad post after the war, Lloyd's main archaeological activity was the excavation of Eridu, an early Sumerian city, in collaboration with Fuad Safar. Also at this time he and Hyde acquired Woolstone Lodge, the house just below the Berkshire White Horse which was to be their family home for the rest of their lives.

Now his links with John Garstang bore fruit, for when the latter succeeded in establishing a new British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, Seton Lloyd was invited to become its first director. He moved to Ankara in 1949 and during the next 12 years acquired that abiding love of Turkey, its people and its past which is amply attested in many of his publications. The relations which he established with Turkish colleagues ensured a successful start to the new enterprise and built up a fund of local good will. Many British archaeologists remember with pleasure the warm family atmosphere which the Lloyds created in the institute.

Adapting well to the parsimonious conditions of British archaeological provisions, Lloyd inaugurated a number of limited but carefully planned operations, which produced valuable and significant results. Among his initial activities were the Potlath sounding, which produced a very important pottery sequence; the Sultantepe excavations, where he had the good luck to hit a major collection of cuneiform tablets forming an Assyrian provincial library; and his survey of Alayra Castle.

The major effort of his Ankara tenure was the excavation of Beyce Sultan, six seasons conducted in collaboration with



Lloyd: Anatolian studies

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The major effort of his Ankara tenure was the excavation of Beyce Sultan, six seasons conducted in collaboration with

James Mellaart. Though he always confessed himself disappointed with Beyce for its comparative lack of finds, including an absence of written material, the architectural remains which he recovered and interpreted were dramatic enough, and the excavations added a new province to Anatolian archaeology, linking for the first time the interior plateau with the west coast.

By good fortune, about the time that Lloyd and his wife decided that their nomadic expatriate life should cease, the Professorship of Western Asiatic Archaeology in London fell vacant. Seton Lloyd was appointed and took up his post in 1962, not without some diffidence, since he had no experience of teaching. He need not have worried, for he had no difficulty in communicating his deep archaeological knowledge and enthusiasm. His years at the institute, from 1962 to 1969, were a high point in the study of Near Eastern archaeology.

At this time he inaugurated a final project in collaboration with Charles Burney in the form of an expedition to Urartu, the Iron Age kingdom of Ararat centring on Lake Van in eastern Turkey. Though well conceived, the project unfortunately ran into difficulties and, after a very successful first sea-

son at the site of Kayalidere in the province of Mus, it was unable to continue. But it did mark the beginning of intensive research in Urartu, which has expanded beyond recognition in the last 30 years.

In his retirement, Lloyd remained very active in the affairs of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and the Ankara Institute. He served as Honorary Secretary to the latter from 1962 to 1972, and in 1975 was elected President, serving until 1981. He was also President of the Iraq School from 1979 to 1982.

No word on Lloyd would be complete without reference to his publications. Unlike so many of his profession, he never allowed an overwhelming backlog of material to accumulate. Both his regular preliminary reports, latterly mostly in the early numbers of *Anatolian Studies*, and his prompt final reports were concise, clear and meticulous, illustrated by his own beautifully drawn and instantly recognisable plans and reconstructions. In addition to his professional writing, he also leaves a number of notable and very readable publications for the interested layman, including *Foundations in the Dust* (1947; revised 1980), *Early Anatolia* (Pelican Books, 1956), *Mounds of the Ancient Near East*

(1963) and *Ancient Turkey* (1989).

Seton Lloyd was a tall, imposing figure, who always dressed well. He united an outward reticence, even diffidence, with a pleasing dry humour. In a combination, which today seems curious, he was both a great lover of natural beauty and wild life, and an enthusiastic shot. He was very happy with his wife Hyde, herself an outstandingly lovable personality, and an accomplished artist and sculptor, who enjoyed sharing his archaeological life. Sadly she predeceased him by eight years. The atmosphere which they created in their lovely house, Woolstone Lodge, will remain an unforgettable memory to all lucky enough to have known it.

J. D. Hawkins

Seton Howard Frederick Lloyd, archaeologist: born 30 May 1902; FSA 1938; Technical Adviser, Government of Iraq, Directorate-General of Antiquities 1939-49; OBE 1948, CBE 1958; Director, British Institute of Archaeology, Ankara 1949-61; FBA 1955; Professor of Western Asiatic Archaeology, London University 1962-69 (Emeritus); President, British School of Archaeology in Iraq 1979-82; married 1944 Ulrica Hyde (died 1987; two sons, one daughter); died 7 January 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

PARKER: On 4 January to Petra (née BERRY) and Robin, a son. William Thomas, a brother to Matthew.

DEATHS

CONDON: Desmond, aged 89 years, died peacefully at West Middlesex Hospital, on 24 December 1995. A former Deputy Head at St Thomas More School, Chelsea, for nearly 30 years, his funeral service took place on 8 January 1996, at St Michael and St Martin Church, Hammersmith.

POURKAI: On 4 January 1996, Bahram Khan, of Tehran, Iran, at the Hospital of St John and St Elizabeth, London, after a short illness. Funeral at Eltham Crematorium, 11.30am, 26 January. All enquiries to Francis Chappell, telephone 0181-303 4777.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment march the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment march the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am; the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment march the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment march the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Craigie Aitchison, painter, 70; Air Marshal Sir John Baker-Carr, 90; Sir Brian Barratt-Beyes, heart surgeon, 72; Mr Clive Betts MP, 46; Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, former prime minister of Queensland, 85; Mr Richard Blackford, composer, 42; Mr Michael Bond, creator of "Paddington Bear", 70; Dr Sydney Brenner, biologist, 69; Sir John Caines, former senior civil servant, 63; Mr Edward Crew, Chief Constable, Northamptonshire, 50; Mr Tim Flavin, actor, dancer and singer, 37; Mr Stephen Hendry, snooker player, 27; The Right Rev Michael Henley, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, 57; Lord Johnston, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 54; Sir Liam McCollum, High Court judge, Northern Ireland, 63; Mr Ronan Rafferty, golfer, 32; Sir Colin Shepherd MP, 58; Mr Bernard Shrimley, Associate Editor, *Daily Express*, 65; Mr Robert Stack, film actor, 77; Mr Kenneth Turpin, former Vice-Chancellor, Oxford University, 81; The Right Rev Michael Vickers, Assistant Bishop, Blackburn, 67.

TOMORROW: Captain Sir Alastair Aird, Comptroller to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 65; Professor Sir Melville Arnott, cardiologist, 87; Mr Peter Barkworth, actor, 67; Miss Carol Bellamy, executive director of Unicef, 54; Mr Richard Briers, actor, 62; Baroness Brooke of Yarncliffe, former vice-chairman, Conservative Party, 88; Lord Catto, president, Morgan Grenfell, 73; Miss Faye Dunaway, actress, 55; Miss Moina Gielgud, ballerina, 91; Miss Andrée Grenfell, former managing director, Glenby International, 50;

Mr Brian Hardie, cricketer, 46; Sir Martin Holdgate, former director-general, International Union for Conservation of Nature, 65; Sir Arthur Hoole, solicitor and former chairman of the College of Law, 72; Mr Jack Jones, singer, 58; Professor Sir Hans Kornberg, Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, 68; Mr John Leary, Headmaster, Camford School, 46; Mr Warren Mitchell, actor, 70; Mr Trevor Nunn, theatre director, 56; Sir Nell Pritchard, former ambassador to Thailand, 85; Mr Christopher Reeves, banker, 60; Sir Vernon Secombe, chairman, Flymouth Hospitals NHS Trust, 68; Mike Caterina Valente, guitarist and singer, 65; Mr Bill Werbernick, snooker player, 40; Sir John Woodcock, former HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, 64; Mr Roger Young, chief executive, Scottish Hydro-Electric, 52.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Charles Perrault, collector of fairy tales, 1628; Lord Willis (Edward Henry "Ted" Willis), playwright, 1913. Deaths: Edmund Spenser, poet, 1599; William Friend De Morgan, artist and author, 1917; Sebastian Ziani de Ferranti, electrical engineer, 1930; James Joyce, novelist, 1941; Hubert Horatio Humphrey, US vice-president, 1978. On this day: the Independent Labour Party was formed under Keir Hardie, 1893; the world's largest airport was opened in Dallas, Texas, 1974. Today is the Feast Day of St Agnes, St Berno and St Hilary of Poitiers.

TOMORROW: Births: Dr Albert Schweitzer, missionary, 1875; Hugh Lofting, author, 1886; Sir Cecil Walter Hardy Beaton, photographer

and stage designer, 1904; Joseph Losey, film director, 1909. Deaths: Edmund Halley, astronomer, 1742; George Dance the younger, architect, 1825; Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, painter, 1867; Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), author, 1898; Humphrey DeForest Bogart, film actor, 1957; Anais Nin, writer and poet, 1977; Peter Finch (William Mitchell), actor, 1977. On this day: the Great Frost Fair began on the Thames, 1205; another Great Frost Fair was held on the Thames, 1814; Queen Victoria heard a concert relayed to her by telephone, 1878. Today is the Feast Day of St Anthony Pucci, St Barbasymas or Barbascemin, St Datus, St Felix of Nola, St Kenigens or Mungo, St Maerina the Elder, The Martyrs of Mount Sinai and St Sava.

Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland

The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland held their Winter Scientific Meeting dinner yesterday evening at the Café Royal, London W1. Dr S. M. Lyons, President, and Mrs Lyons were the hosts. Amongst those present were:

Dr and Mrs W.L.M. Bain, Professor J.P. Blundy, Dr and Mrs A.L. Brain, Sir Kenneth and Lady Calman, Dr H. and the Rev W. Campbell, Professor and Mrs R.S.J. Clarke, Dr C.J. Clough, Mr and Mrs H.W. Cooke, Dr and Mrs J.C. Cooper, Mr B.H. Goodman, Mr and Mrs G.D. Gower, Sir Douglas and Lady Irvine, Mr J.N. Johnson, Sir Robert and Lady Kypriakidis, Dr and Mrs S.W. Linn, Mr and Mrs E. Lindt, Dr A. Moore, Dr and Mrs J.F. Nunn, Professor T.H. O. Professor and Mrs C. Poy-Roberts, Mr and Mrs W.R. Reid, Professor and Mrs M. Rosen, Sir Rodney and Lady Sweetnam, Professor and Mrs M.D. Vickers, Mr Sue Vincent.

One man's heaven is another man's hell

faith & reason

This week the Church of England Doctrine Commission issued a report outlining church policy on salvation. Peter Mullen berates the media for their consumerist response.

All the talk about whether you are "saved" or not, overlooks the main point: would you even want to be? Most commentary on the Church of England's report *The Mystery of Salvation* throughout assumes that heaven is a kind of prize – as if spiritual rewards were like material goods, though the report itself makes clear that this can't be true.

The problem is that we are so saturated by consumerism that we cannot help thinking of heaven as some sort of up-market package holiday, endless of course and free – the ultimate special offer. We crudely imagine that heaven is a place where we might be happy.

Fortunately (or unfortunately) heaven is not a bit of what anyone and everyone might fancy. Club Med for the raunchy youngsters, an everlasting debate on the structures of ecclesiastical management for the Synod's standing committee, or even a timeless Test match for me. Heaven is traditionally and clearly defined as the nearer presence of God. Now that I have reminded you of that fact, are you sure you really want to go there – dead or alive?

Consumerism has seen to it that we think heaven is something which is for us. The reality is that it is we who are for heaven. The only question is whether we are ready for it. The purpose of our life is not to try our best at virtue and self-denial in order that we might receive our reward in heaven as permission at long last to let rip and really indulge ourselves. Our purpose is so to order our desires and pas-

sions in this world that the holiness of the world will not be a nasty shock. There is economic convenience in this scheme, for it means that God does not have to provide two sorts of eternal habitation. One will do. The heaven of the devout will be hell for the disobedient and careless. And it is in this sense only that God cannot compel everyone to be saved: for God cannot force us to desire Him.

Spiritual truth is the very opposite of consumerism. That is to say, all talk about salvation and damnation must be seen in the context of Christ's words: "He who seeks to save his life will lose it." The divine economy does not work like the supermarket. In the heavenly life giving really is receiving. We are so used to thinking of rewards and punishments as objects that we are blind to the radical subjectivity of salvation. In order to receive heaven

as salvation and not as damnation we must make ourselves ready to receive it.

We are not spiritual consumers, free to make up our own minds about which precise form of eternal bliss we would like to sample. We are made in a certain image and form whose purpose is preordained: it is to find our true selves in the person of God. Aristotle knew this and he called it our *telos*, and it means our *raison d'être*. Or, as St Augustine says in his beautiful prayer: "O Lord, Thou has made us for Thyself and our souls are restless till they rest in Thee."

Who then can be saved? How can I receive salvation when my desire for God is constantly being choked by lust for worldly things, when my love for Him is intermittent and lukewarm? The traditional answer is that these things take time and they come only with pain and struggle. And beyond the heaven-hell dichotomy the Church teaches the doctrine of purgatory – which is not so much a place as a process of gradually coming to the true recognition of the things which can really nourish us. Some of us may have to spend a lot of time in purgatory. In fact of course purgatory begins here on earth before we shuffle off this mortal coil.

Think of purgatory as a finishing school for the desires and passions, a place for the ordering of unruly wills and affections of sinful men. Yes, we shall all get through in the end. And cheer up! Remember St Thomas Aquinas said, "Yes, hell exists – but there is almost certainly no one in it."

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The Independent Weekend

THE QUICK GETAWAY
GUIDE TO WEEKEND
SKIING
pages 14 & 15

Whitney Houston has a lot to smile about: Nicole David is her agent

A week in the life
of a Hollywood
dealmaker, page 7

INSIDE STORIES

5 'There's something enjoyable about writing violent stuff,' says Nick Cave, 'about sitting down and making a character so naïve and virtuous, then wiping her out. What I found exciting was creating songs where I could go into some detail about the savagery of the act'

5 'Men want to compliment the woman, so they buy a smaller size bra which only makes her feel worse,' says Mrs Box of Knickerbox. 'We get a lot of red satin coming back. The guys might like it but the girls bring it back and exchange it for white cotton'

21 Perhaps it's because Christmas is the only time when busy families can sit down and make decisions, but January is no longer the ugly sister of the property year. Sales are up, and it's not just down to the seasonal batch of sales by divorcees

Photograph: Rex Features

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Alan Bennett wishes you a rewarding New Year with the London Review of Books



'David Frost's rise as a political commentator is in direct proportion to the decline of respect for politicians. Major, Blair and Ashdown meekly trot along to be lightly grilled by Frost, and indeed use the occasion for statements of policy and matters of national importance. It's as if Jesus were to undertake the feeding of the Five Thousand as a contribution to *Challenge America*.'

Alan Bennett, in the current issue of the *London Review of Books*

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1995

picture story

PIT STOP



Pictures by
Laurie Lewis
Story by Nick
Kimberley

Eight days to curtain up on Covent Garden's new staging of Michael Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* and the press is buzzing with rumours of the backstage dramas revealed in a BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary due to go out on the opera's opening night. No signs of panic, though, as Monday's rehearsals get under way. The stage is littered with cool-boxes and picnic-baskets. Act 3 is party time. From the back of the auditorium, Graham Vick (director), Wolfgang Göbbel (lighting) and Paul Brown (design) watch proceedings. Their desk, with its bank of computer screens, mikes and sundry electricals, is Mission Control.

In the pit, Sir Bernard Haitink, music director, runs through one of the opera's "Ritual Dances", the dancers audibly panting at their exertions. Directly behind Haitink in the stalls, David Syrus, who will conduct one performance, checks Haitink's timings, using a pencil for a baton. He mutters to Haitink, who cocks an ear without missing a beat. Out in the auditorium, people whisper and scuffle: just like any night at the opera. Soloists and chorus join proceedings. Eventually Haitink calls, "I think we'll leave it there." The pit empties in no time. An oboist stays behind to practise her runs, Vick shouts to his design team, "Wolfgang! We've got five minutes," as if this is a heavenly gift. Everyone else is off to the canteen. There, Pearl de Coteau is used to clearing up after singers. She's worked here for eight years but when I ask if she ever attends a performance, she says "No" as if it's a particularly stupid question. Do the singers ever act like, well, prima donnas? "They're always well behaved... with me," she replies, suggesting that misbehaviour would be more than their careers were worth.

Meanwhile, Vick has called his singers into an upstairs room to talk through their parts. The photographer and I are asked to leave. Back downstairs, Haitink takes the chorus through a number and politely suggests, "I think it'll help if we go over this once more." As the music plays, there is rustling from Mission Control. Haitink, the merest hint of asperity in his tone, calls, "Stop talking, please. Shut up!" At the next break, Vick throws his arm around the conductor's shoulder: "Bernard, I'm sorry." That's as close as it gets to friction. In the pit, a lone violinist makes amendments to his score while Stephen O'Mara, the tenor lead, asks Haitink's advice about a difficult phrase he has to sing. Haitink talks him through it.

In the final session, problems occur with moving parts that don't move, while the bass, John Tomlinson, struggles with a huge length of fabric that gets tangled. Scurrying, as if to evade notice, Vick potters about the stage, showing exactly the movement he's after. He mimes the jerky spasms he wants from one singer, while all around the chorus sings. "Is it a vision? Is it a dream?"

Finally, Haitink's brisk "Thank you!" dismisses the orchestra. Vick is still advising the chorus: "If any of you has a picnic basket that can be stood on, stand on it." At the edge of the stage, a dancer massages a colleague's neck. Flat on her back, another goes through complex stretching exercises. Choreographer Ron Howell thanks his charges. Vick calls to his designer: "Paul, do you want to see John's wig tomorrow?" The answer is curt: "No." Rehearsal is over. Seven days to go.

'The Midsummer Marriage' at the Royal Opera House, London WC2, 16, 19, 27 Jan, 8, 12 and 14 Feb. Booking: 0171-304 4000



Take it from the top: picture below, Ron Howell (left) and Sir Bernard Haitink, music director of the Royal Opera; second left, Christopher Ventris and Liliane Watson



THIS WEEKEND WHY NOT...

EDITED BY DAVID BENEDICT

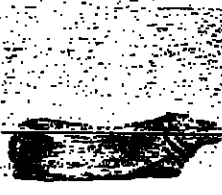
TAKE PART IN A Gamelan Workshop



In school music lessons, the percussion section used to be distinctly unglamorous. Who wanted to be caught dead bonging a chime bar or jingling away on the triangle? Being left in charge of a kettle drum or a massive pair of cymbals did have a certain allure though. Nothing, however, in comparison with the wonders of a gamelan ensemble. The South Bank Centre is running two two-hour "taster" workshops on their own genuine Javanese gamelan collection, a range of instruments that renders Western instruments anodyne. You need no musical experience and anyone from the age of seven upwards is invited to make music. And you thought J Arthur Rank was the last word in gongs.

11.30am, 3pm South Bank Centre, London SE1 (0171-960 4242) Adults £5 Children £2.50 Family tickets (2 adults and up to 3 children) £10.

BUY Derek Pearce Sculpture



In a completely original niche between furniture design and sculpture you'll find the remarkable Derek Pearce. A master craftsman and designer, he has also worked as a composer and an actor, which accounts for the dramatic element to his elegant, witty pieces, particularly the Water Tables. The Hippo Table sees the carved wooden creature peeping over the water, in the form of the glass table top. Others include a round pond table supported by three cold-cast bronze diving ducks, or the sublime table held aloft by two bronze synchronised swimmers. His recent homage to Charles Rennie Mackintosh incorporated an immaculately carved mackintosh lying on a wooden table. It was commissioned by Glasgow airport, the perfect place to let his imagination take flight.

The Hippo Table is £4,500. Others start at £2,500. Derek Pearce is on 0181-741 0819.

WATCH Mark Elder conduct Holst



Early 20th-century British composers have a bad name. Carping critics allude to the over-reliance on folk-tunes, lumping composers into the English "cow-pat school". Gustav Holst would appear to be one of the unwitting founder-members of this so-called school; Delius, a Bradford wool merchant's son who died of syphilis in France, is on the edge. Tippett meanwhile is completely outside it. In any event, conductor Mark Elder (above) would probably pooch-pooch the entire lame-brained theory. Tonight he conducts works by all three composers with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in the glorious acoustic of their very own Symphony Hall. Why Elder is not the musical director of an opera house or the artistic director of one of our major orchestras is an abiding mystery.

7.30pm Symphony Hall, Birmingham (0121-212 3333).

CATCH The Bluetones in Dublin



Headlining the twinklingly named *NME!* Miller Genuine Draft Brat Bus Tour, Hounslow's very own The Bluetones are the name on every pop-picker's pickled pucker as the band to bank on in 1996. They jangle expertly, their melodies turn lovely corners, and their mop-tops are all their own. Furthermore, their first baby is due any week now. Britpop may be dead but the electric guitar carries on regardless. Bratty support comes in the many shapes of the Cardigans, Heavy Stereo and Notting Hill's ghastly Fluffy, who are every bit as irritating as they sound. The tour hits Dublin tonight before moving on over the coming week to Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, Wolverhampton, Bristol, Cambridge and London.

Dublin tickets £8.75 (00 353 1456 9569).

LISTEN TO Simon Armitage reading poetry



As events in their own rights, literary prizes are about as attention-grabbing as a pair of Y-fronts hung out to dry on a washing line. But in that they spawn related events (usually, gatherings of closet poetry fanatics), they are to be obsequiously thanked. Take the TS Eliot Poetry Prize, for example, which "aims to stimulate interest in contemporary poetry" with a £5,000 carrot. If it does so, it will be more due to the opportunity to see and hear all 10 shortlisted poets in one place tomorrow night than because of the final selection. Now's your chance to catch up on the "new lad" poets (Simon Armitage, above, and Glyn Maxwell) as well as discover the lesser known, diverse enchantments of Katherine Piarpoint, Maurice Roffman and others. Fear not: none is averse to a good line.

7pm, Sun, Almeida Theatre, Almeida Square, London, N1 (0171-359 3400).

Handwritten note: 11/1/96



Nick Cave was a very bad seed indeed. He did the drugs, the room wrecking, the whole rock schtick. But now the last cool God has grown up. Now he's just lines murder. By Andy Gill. Photograph by Steve Double

There was a time, back in the Eighties, when Nick Cave was the biggest roaring-boy reprobate in rock music. Tales were rife of bad behaviour pursued almost as an act of faith: of the time he physically attacked a journalist who probed his heroin addiction a little too tenaciously; or the time he and his band The Bad Seeds wrecked a German film-festival gala; or, most famously, the time he pulled a syringe from his arm and started writing a letter in his own blood – on board a London tube train.

Since then, Cave's grown a little more mature. He's published an acclaimed novel, *And the Ass Saw the Angel*; acted in several films, including his friend Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire*; been through rehab for the heroin addiction; and finally has his drinking under control. Perhaps not coincidentally, his albums have become more successful, both critically and commercially – they now routinely sell more than a quarter of a million copies, unusual for a fringe artist – and in the past couple of years, he's got married, become a father, and separated, as if packing an entire adult life into a matter of months.

Now, he's contemplating murder. Bloody, violent, senseless murder, and plenty of it. Cave's forthcoming album *Murder Ballads* (released 5 February) features nine gory examples of the genre capped with a version of Bob Dylan's "Death is Not the End" which turns that epistle of hope into a bleak promise of further tribulation. If, as seems likely, the album continues the current upward trajectory of his career, there will be a fine irony in this most self-destructive of artists deriving his greatest success from death, when for many years, he had seemed to be on a more personal collision-course with it.

In a hotel suite near his Notting Hill flat, Cave chain-smokes and drinks tea while musing on his latest project and his past reputation. "People expect certain things from me," he says, "and I guess they're disappointed when they don't get them." Always obsessive about language, his comments come via a stutter of aborted sentences, as he seeks the most accurate way of phrasing. With his generous lips and upturned nose, he has something of the aspect of a pugacious romantic, though with a cartoon side that offsets his seriousness (Billy Bragg once cogently compared him to the Cat in the Hat, from the Dr Seuss children's books). He seems more focused than the last time I spoke to him, a few years ago. Then, he had knocked the heroin and the speed on the head, and was tackling the alcohol problem on a daily basis, "just trying to drink one day at a time – but I don't feel like I've gone through something and risen into this blazing white light, or whatever." Now, a mutual friend reports, he's completely off the booze, too: "It's quite annoying – now you have to lay on the Ribena for when Nick comes round."

The son of a librarian and a teacher, Cave was born in Warracknabeal, a small country town 180 miles north of Melbourne, in September 1957. Through his teens, he developed the exhibitionist manner that would later serve him well in his Iggy Pop-style stage performances, getting a reputation for taking his clothes off at parties, and developing an interest in the various rock 'n' roll libations. An equally significant spur to future endeavours, however, was provided by his father, who read Nabokov's *Lolita* to him when he was 15.

Inspired by the punk revolution, Cave's first group, The Boys Next Door, pursued a typically rowdy path through the Eastern Australian states, getting banned from many venues for their behaviour and their uncompromising music, which was completely at odds with the general run of Aussie R&B pub-rock. On one occasion, he and bassist Tracy Pew were arrested when, en route to a show in Canberra, they urinated out of the back of the band van while it was moving; the car behind, unfortunately for them, contained a local policeman's wife, who was convinced they had been masturbating for several miles.

It was around this time that Cave first experimented with heroin, developing the habit which would, over the next decade and a half, lead him into some of the world's less salubrious districts, reaching a nadir of sorts in 1986, when he was busted in New York for possession of heroin and syringes. A week later in Los Angeles, attempting to score in the wrong part of town, he was robbed at gunpoint. Eventually, after pleading guilty to another bust in 1988, he would enter a detox programme at a Weston-Super-Mare clinic.

In February 1980, the group – now renamed The Birthday Party – relocated to London, the first of a succession of moves which has seen the restless singer set up home in places as far afield as Berlin and Sao Paulo. "He likes to put himself in outsider situations," explains Cave's friend, the photographer Bledwyn Butcher. As the band hurtled full-speed towards its eventual dissolution in 1983, Cave began work on a manuscript which would eventually be published in 1989 as *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. An ambitious work whose florid, anachronistic prose style attempts to capture the inner voice of a mute psychotic in the early decades of this century, the novel represents the apotheosis of several themes which had become constants in his work with The Birthday Party and, later, on a series of albums with The Bad Seeds: sex, death, violence, religion and the American South.

"I was quite possessed when I wrote that book, it just poured out, unstoppable," he recalls. It purged a lot of things that had been plaguing me for a long time.

The novel went on to sell an astonishing 15,000 hardback copies in the UK, and a further 35,000 copies when Penguin put out the paperback – extraordinary for a first novel – and was widely acclaimed as a prodigious feat of imagination. But, apotheosis or not, it clearly didn't drain Cave of his interest in violent death, judging by *Murder Ballads*. It's a strange, album, suspended somewhere between despair and black comedy, with few punches pulled. Innocents are slaughtered without remorse, madmen (and madwomen) stalk the songs, and corpses litter the proceedings.

One song alone, the 15-minute-long "O'Malley's Bar", has the kind of body-count that would raise even Quentin Tarantino's eyebrows, but without bothering with anything as troublesome as motivation. Basically, it's a simple case of man enters bar, man shoots everyone in bar, done in a kind of narrative slow-motion that's something like the aural equivalent of Peckinpah's cinematic shoot-ups.

"I wrote that in all sorts of different states of mind," Cave explains. "I remember sitting by the pool on tour, with a banana daiquiri in my hand, writing several verses and thinking I wanted to somehow get 'banana daiquiri' in the song, that one of the characters should be drinking that. I think it goes, 'So then I approached Robert Thackeray, and shot him right through his banana daiquiri', or something like that."

"It's one of those ongoing shaggy-dog-story type songs that if you've got a spare moment you can always write a verse for. Which ends up making interesting songs – you can't really remember what you've written before, so your sympathies towards the central character change a lot. Within that particular song, which is for me the main song on the record, there's a good indication of my mixed feelings towards that type of killer: on the one hand, being quite sympathetic towards his plight, finding a certain amount of rage and disgust at a society that creates a situation where somebody has to go out and do something horrendous like this in order to get a little meaning into their life, but at the same time being unsympathetic towards that character because he's killed a lot of innocent people."

This is as close as Cave gets to sitting in judgement on his characters – though even that is a more persuasive demonstration of sympathy than is extended to the victims. There's a powerful sense of alienation about the album, as if Cave wanted to indulge certain morbid, violent fantasies and at the same time drain them of their glamour, defusing the myth of the superman-psychopath as fostered so assiduously by Hollywood. In these *Murder Ballads*, we're constantly forced to confront what Hannah Arendt once famously called "the banality of evil".

"Exactly," Cave agrees. "Very often murder seems to be simply a case of lack of imagination, more than anything else. Derek Raymond, the crime writer, was getting to a very interesting point with his books before his death: his take was that the criminal was a bore, and especially the murderer."

"Even though the songs have the idea of murder linking them together," Cave continues, "some of them are just flat-out comic songs, nothing more than that. 'The Kindness of Strangers', for instance, is simply an exercise in cruelty, sitting down and writing a character and making her so naive and virtuous, then wiping her out. I can't define this, but there is a certain satisfaction in doing that. You can see it done on a grand scale in the Marquis de Sade: *Justine* is about that, and Nabokov's *Lolita*, too, to a certain extent – the killing of the mother especially. Just sitting down and inventing a character that would be a delight to kill, and killing her."

Other songs are less easily assimilated into the realms of cruelty or comedy. The single, "Where the Wild Roses Grow", on which Cave duets with his fellow Australian Kylie Minogue in a tale of romantic obsession slipping into homicide, is, despite the apparent incongruity of the partnership, a genuinely beguiling piece of work which brought the singer a delicious cold collation of revenge when it reached number one in Australia – quite a change from when he first left his homeland, when his fans numbered at most between two to three hundred die-hard punks. Not surprisingly, he's quietly delighted with its success.

"You only have to listen to the song to realise that it was a marriage made in heaven, really," he says of the duet. "To me, it was a perfect coupling of voices and characters. I'm immensely proud of that little episode in my creative life. It's something I've wanted to do for years, sing a song with Kylie Minogue." One of the LP's more haunting moments, it's the kind of song which would not have been out of place on the recent album of death songs from the man Cave acknowledges as "the master of the murder ballad", Johnny Cash.

Though he's grown bored with the genre, Cave was until recently a keen enthusiast of crime fiction, particularly the visceral novels of James Ellroy. The respect is apparently mutual: Ellroy, who dislikes most rock music on principle, gave Cave a signed copy of *White Jazz* bearing the inscription "Nick, feel those evil rock 'n' roll chords of doom. That song in *Until the End of the World* really kicked my ass!"

"For me, there is something enjoyable about writing violent stuff," Cave admits. "There's certain types of language that can be exciting to use, particularly in the song format, where descriptive violence really hasn't existed, apart from gangsta-rap, but even in those they generalise the act quite a lot, simply because songs are short things and you can't go into too much detail. What I found exciting about writing the *Murder Ballads* thing was creating songs where I could go into some detail about the savagery of the act."

Cave subscribes to the Manichean notion of fundamental good and evil operating within us all, but he abjures organised religion: indeed, the *Murder Ballads* album is unique within his canon of nine albums in featuring no preachers. When I point this out, he is cheerfully aghast: "Good God! I should have murdered one of them, at least!" It's in this spirit, rather than with any moralistic or apocalyptic intention, that the album is intended to be taken.

"This record is chiefly a comic record, it's designed to be funny," Cave concludes. "It didn't start off that way, but as soon as we started to make it, it became clear that the whole idea was quite ludicrous, to be making an entire record like this. Maybe going out and finding a dozen traditional murder ballads might be fair enough, but to actually sit down and have to write all this stuff... it became a bit of a joke."

But a sick joke, mercifully. Anything less would be quite out of character.

shopping

six of the best jumpers

1 Margaret Howell, £130 John Smedley T-shirt, £50. The jumper is open weave navy linen, and has side vents. Layered over a Sea Island cotton "Second Skin" T-shirt, it looks effortlessly chic. This is perfect for the man who likes to feel casual - but also likes to spend money to achieve the look. Margaret Howell, 24 Brook Street, London W1. Enquiries 0171-627 5587. John Smedley, enquiries 0171-734 1519.



2 BHS, £20 Undenially the best bargain of the lot. At only £20, this is an easy buy which will see you through sloppy-joe weekends, and will be a favourite with your girlfriend, who will probably try to pinch it at every opportunity. It is 87 per cent cotton, so is lovely against the skin. Available from BHS stores nationwide. Enquiries: 0171-262 3288.



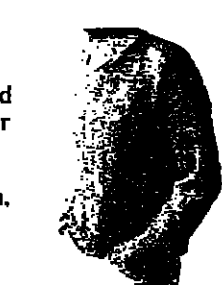
3 Replay, £95 The jumper suitable for a lady night out. It's big, comfy, cuddly, and it's 50 per cent cotton, 50 per cent acrylic. For the label-conscious man, who likes to wear his label on the outside without being too obvious. Replay, 52 Long Acre, London WC2. Enquiries: 0171-267 5632.



4 Woodhouse, £79.95 with French Connection cardigan, £60. The jumper (which should be tucked in to your trousers) is from the Jarvis Cocker school of fashion and has that "grown out of it" appeal. It is also a classic which should see you through winter and spring. The cardigan is similarly Joe Cockerish - short on waistband, long in the arms. Cardigan available from French Connection stores nationwide: enquiries 0171-580 2507. Woodhouse, enquiries: 0171-629 1254.



5 Assets, £85 This company is consistently on the pulse with its laid back and tactile collections for men and women. This jumper, which is 57 per cent cotton, 30 per cent nylon and 13 per cent linen, is extremely comfortable, fluid, and easy to wear with casual and pseudo-smart clothes. Available from Assets, 29 Floral Street, London WC2. Enquiries 0171-625 8423.



6 Armand Basi, £70 (John Smedley jumper around neck £65.) The Basi jumper was a bit itchy, but otherwise comfy and practical. In mild weather it could take the place of a jacket. The Smedley is made from super-fine wool and seen here serves well as a glorified scarf. Armand Basi, enquiries: 0171-379 3843. John Smedley as before.



The \$1,300 question

Would you fly 5,000 miles for a customised shopping experience? Christina Bloom did

I phone my friend Janet in California. "I'm coming to do some shopping." "You're coming five thousand miles to go shopping?" she asks, incredulous. "Why not. I have Frequent Flyer miles to burn and a partner who's spent so much time flying the Friendly Skies he's positively keen to spend a week minding the children."

"How about the Macy's customised shopping service, then?" says Janet, and sends me the details.

The service is called "Macy's By Appointment" and is managed by Joanna Chang. You call her to let her know which days and approximate times you'll be at Macy's and give her your size, type of merchandise you need, designer favourites and any restrictions you may have. The service provides everything from clothes and hats to household goods.

"Do you have any sense of what size you might be in US terms?" Joanna asks when I phone.

"Ern, a 12, maybe a 10," I reply. US sizes go down to six. "And five foot two," I add.

"So, petites," she says. "And corporate, right?"

"Yes, smart clothes. The real emergency is work clothes." I've been wearing the same red jacket for three years, and my skirts date back to the mid-Eighties. Joanna is reassuring.

Five thousand miles later, I'm at the Stanford Shopping Center. A select mall in Palo Alto, not far from San Francisco, and walking distance from one of the most expensive private universities in the US, it doesn't suffer from modesty: Macy's, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Emporium and Nordstrom are all here. Along the flowery boulevards with their cool fountains ("Recycled/Reclaimed Water as part of Stanford Shopping Center's water conservation"), there are other select establishments: Imaginarium ("A Toy Store Kids Can Handle"); A Pea in the Pod ("Maternity Redefined"); Learnsmith ("A General Store for the Curious Mind").

I meet Joanna in her Macy's office, with its suite of private dressing rooms. She's prepared a splendid selection of clothes for me to try on. Incredibly, they fit. The waists are right, the hems are correct, the shoulders work without being tight across the bust. As they say in California, no journey is too long to find out who you are. I've discovered my true nature: US size 12, petite.

The clothes are stunning, designed for women who expect to be seen. Styles are imaginative, fabrics comfortable and interesting. Fortified

Before you go customised shopping in the States...

Do

Know the exchange rate. Carry a calculator, pre-programmed with the rate if necessary.

Allow enough time. Spend a few hours looking round the store before your appointment. Then reckon on at least half a day for your consultation.

Pay by credit card rather than travellers' cheques. If anything goes wrong with the purchase the credit card company is your ally - and the exchange rate will probably be a little more favourable.

Don't

Overlook the effects of jet lag. Allow for rest after arrival. The serious shopper has sharp wits and an alert mind.

Forget to leave time for a recovery period - and perhaps a bit of sightseeing.

Think you'll just walk away. Consider your transport arrangements and how you'll carry everything.

with a jug of coffee and dainty biscuits, we work hard. Joanna, mediating between dressing room and sales floor, is indispensable. She listens, advises and fine-tunes. Her instincts and knowledge of stock are sound.

She finds me things I'd never think to look for. I try on an tweedy jacket to discover that the fit's immaculate, the style precisely Nineties and cleverly understated and that the tweed, being a wool/silk mix, moulds itself winningly to my awkward 36E bust. An off-the-peg Jones of New York, it costs \$208 (£139). Joanna brings me a coordinating, tailored wool crepe skirt at \$88 (£58) and a matching silk shell, \$60 (£40). We find a Carole Little dress in a perky short pleated style and interesting Italian fabric for \$128 (£85) and a Carole Little knit suit in aquamarine, embellished with intricate sparkly black beading for \$198 (£132). It's elegant and coolly comfortable; a soft skirt with elasticated waist and a well-shaped long cardigan.

Inevitably, my budget resolve begins to weaken. I can feel money melting. Joanna finds me a winter coat whose fit and style are heavenly: a double-breasted Kristen Blake in wool camel. "As it happens," she says, "I think that one



Macy's personal shopping service is pleasant, efficient and honest

comes at 30 per cent off." It costs \$180 (£120).

Four hours later, I've made my selection. "I'll total this up for you," says Joanna, coming back with a price of \$1,700. It's a moment which requires a steady nerve. "That's too much," I say. "What do you think I could leave?" Willingly, she helps me prune out non-essentials. I'm left with a bill of \$1,300 (£867), which includes: a Gianni blouse for \$90 (£60); a Charter Club Classics green wool blazer-cut jacket, lined with brown satin so that you can wear it with the cuffs rolled back, reduced from \$159 to \$99.99 (£66); black leather Bouliani shoes, \$69 (£46); a Liz Claiborne fleur-de-lis waistcoat, a snip at \$48 (£32). Shop till you

drop? Not exactly. It's been pleasant, efficient, and honest.

The savvy shopper, though, doesn't stop there. I cruise the sales to flesh out the new look, stocking up in Emporium's "Career Sportswear" department with cotton and silk shirts, Jordache stretch jeans and leggings; matt silk knit polo shirts in wonderful hues at \$12 (£8) a throw; half-price Liz Claiborne summer wear: T-shirts and sweaters at under \$15 (£10) each in black, white and adventurous. For \$200 (£133) I have all the separates and casual clothes I could want. In the leather department I find a compact leather handbag for \$22 (£14), and a Michael Stevens soft brown leather satchel, ideal for A4

papers and complete with zips, compartments and pen-holders, for a mere \$14 (£9).

Then I drive down to leafy University Avenue and recover in an elegant cafe with coffee and a cinnamon roll.

HM Customs and Excise takes a dim view of people bringing goods into the country from and avoiding paying duty on them. The allowance you get is £136; above that, it's charged at 13.8 per cent duty, and then VAT is added to the total at 17.5 per cent (excluding children's clothes). At the prices I paid, it's still a win.

Joanna Chang, Manager, Macy's By Appointment, 300 Stanford Center, California: (00 1 415 323 3578).

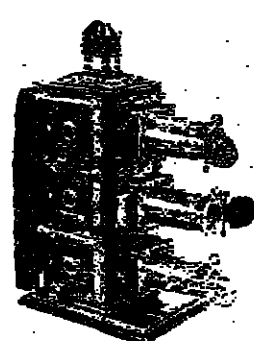
It is the flashy, things that sell best. Take jewellery: pretty little Georgian brooches are as undervalued as they were five years ago



AUCTIONS

Probably the world's finest museum collection of magic lanterns and slides is at Christie's South Kensington, Thursday (10.30am). The 159 lots were formerly exhibited in Llandrindod Wells, but some have been in public performances given by their owners, Doug and Anita Lear, throughout Europe and on their narrowboat. The magic lantern, a favourite in homes of all social classes and church halls between 1860 and 1910, became capable of surprisingly sophisticated effects: "slipping" slides could make the image of a man swallow a rat (a set of eight rat slides is estimated at £120-£180) and the "super three-lens" Steward lantern restored by the Lears from gas and limelight to electricity (shown here) can dissolve between images and produce other special effects such as falling snow. Estimate: £15,000-£25,000.

The bold and the novel will also fetch the best prices at the fortnightly British and continental ceramics sale at Christie's South Kensington, Thursday (10.30am). Estimated at £300-£400 - despite slight wear and restoration - are two novelty Napoleonic coffee cans and two saucers showing "old Boney" with what looks like tattoos on his face. Closer inspection reveals his face to be a *rondeau* of nudes, his cocked hat an eagle and his uniform a map of Leipzig. The pizzazz principle is also pushing up prices for bold 19th century wares,



Steward magic lantern, estimated at £15,000-£25,000

notably Minton and Majolica. But there is the beginnings of a price revival in the more delicate English pottery of the late 18th and early 19th century (Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Swansea) which was once much loved but now as much in disavowal as Georgian silver. A bottle of bubbly to

William Long of Loughton, Essex, for his wicked suggestion in our competition that an Evelyn Waugh bookplate should be stuck in a copy of the Watchtower omnibus to confuse literary historians. The 23 paper bookplates donated to a Sotheby's charity sale last month by Waugh's son, Auberon, fetched £310.

We also liked the well-pounded list of 19 titles from Philip Jaggard of Oxford. He evidently shares Mr Long's eagerness to rock assumptions about Waugh's Roman Catholicism. His list includes Elaine Pagels' "The Gnostic Gospels". He also listed E. Murphy's "Great Boredoms of the World" next to Nancy Mitford's "Noblesse Oblige". Waugh is clearly an author who left much to the imagination.

John Windsor

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Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Eric Holt, 70, Pensioner
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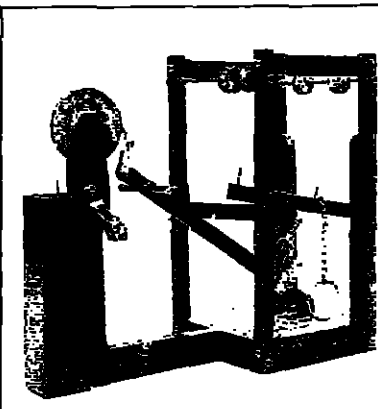
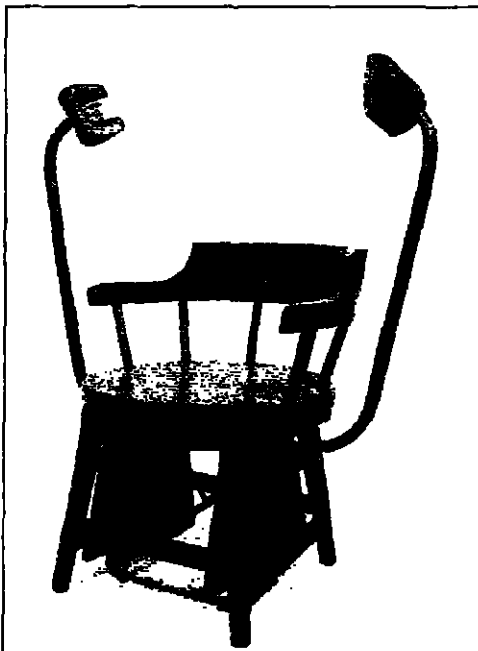
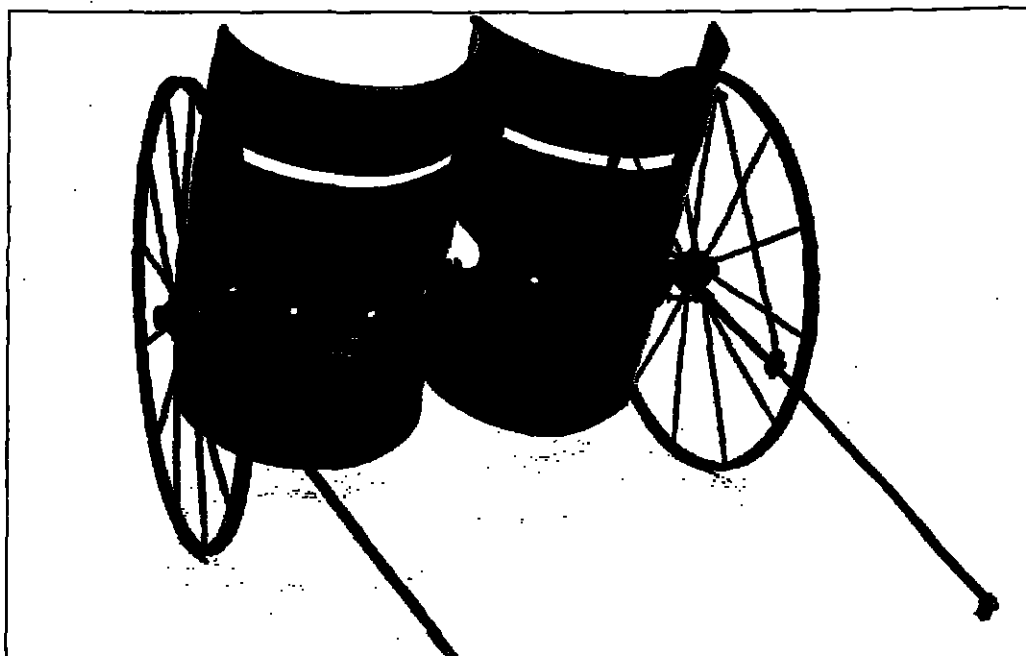
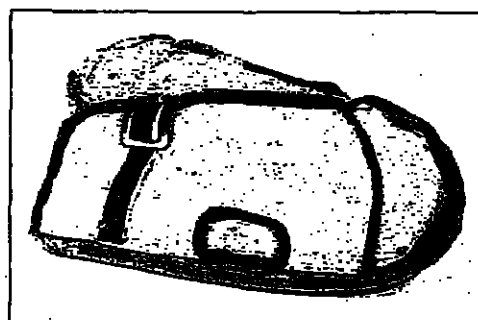
What else? Buy your stamps, write a card, wrap a present even – all at a table set out for customers. Helpful staff will even post your letters and, if not too busy, wrap your presents.

Best buys: Bureau's own-brand disposable fountain pens, highlighters, roller balls and felt-tips. Brightly coloured A4 two-drawer filing cabinets (£59.95). Apparently, the English don't buy A4-size cabinets and certainly not in these colours. Bureau went ahead anyway and the cabinets have been walking out of the shop ever since.

What should I buy there?

What should I buy there: The selection of stylish stationery from Swiss company Biella (from 99p). For the new term you can buy Disney-character rucksacks (£9.99) and matching pencil cases (£2.99). For serious stationery, there's

Thousands of American inventions lie unopened in warehouse crates. John Windsor lifts the lid on a few



From top, left to right: improved swimming gloves with cork (1879); lavatory paper printed with advertisements; Civil-War chariot with defective metal shields; 138-year-old model workstation with built-in bellows; exercise machine (1873)

During the 44 years before 1880 American inventors were required to submit models with their patent applications. About a quarter of a million of them, each no more than 12 inches long—for improved mousetraps, washing machines, life-preserving coffins—crammed the Patent Office in Washington, a testimony to the world's most innovative nation but an embarrassment to the government.

After Congress voted to get rid of them in 1907 a few thousand were bought by museums such as the Smithsonian Institution. Tens of thousands were sold off for a few cents each or accidentally destroyed by fire. To this day, tens of thousands more are in unopened crates in warehouses.

are in unopened crates in warehouses.

Over 4,000 from a private collection, together with their documentation, are to be auctioned by Christie's East in New York on Tuesday 23 January in the first of a series of six sales. For an estimated \$350-\$450 you could become the owner of an improved pair of swimming gloves, made buoyant with cork (1879), or a pack of improved lavatory paper – with printed advertisements (1750-\$350).

There is a model of Thomas Edison's carboniser for light bulb filaments (1881) at \$50,000-\$60,000. Or would you prefer a blast-producing chair at \$7,500-\$9,000? The swivel seat pumps bellows blowing cool air to the head. It is a 138-year-old precursor of modern office workstations.

The 350 inventions in the sale were the first to see daylight when the sale's two cataloguers, from Christie's South Kensington, were ushered into a storage hangar by the collection's owner, Cliff Petersen, a 72-year-old

Mr Petersen had already donated 30,000 models to the United States Patent Model Foundation. He said: "I've been a virtual prisoner of this collection for two decades, but it has given me the greatest fun I've ever had. So many interesting stories!"

The choice of Christie's London is a measure of British expertise in cataloguing scientific models. Tom Rose is an expert on model locomotives, ships and road vehicles, Jeremy Collins on scientific instruments. Mr Rose said: "Unwrapping those models was a complete knockout."

Here was America's machine age documented in miniature. The models – some cobbled together on kitchen tables, others professionally made – are a poignant reminder of the pioneer spirit, of the days when everyone, from log cabin to White House, was an inventor. The wooden model for Abraham Lincoln's "improved manner of buoying vessels over shoals" of 1849, with adjustable air chambers, is in the Smithsonian. But the sale offers Clara Barton's improved sidesaddle with vari-

able horns. When it was patented in 1864, her home town, Ferndale, California, was barely settled. A well-adjusted saddle horn between the thighs could be a comfort if used in hostile territory.

In those days servants were scarce, except in the South. The household inventions of the time, a good number by women, reflect the yearning to have done with drudgery and get on with the piano lessons. By 1873 there were more than 2,000 patents for hand-cranked washing machines. The sale has plenty of improved boot trees, fresh food processors and garden swings - vestiges of the rural settler's dream of the orderly homestead. The inventors have God-fearing names such as Aaron, Elias, Obadiah.

The sale's craziest invention: twin metallic shields on wheels to protect military riflemen in the Civil War years, 1864 (\$1,800-\$2,200). The two men between the shafts would have been picked off in no time. Likewise, the picture hook of 1880 with a wheel for the wire—capable of sending pictures skidding all over the wall. Inventions before their time, besides the blast-producing chair: an exercise machine of 1873 (\$1,500-\$2,000) and an ice house of 1877—an early example of a shipping container (\$1,000-\$1,200).

It was Mark Twain who epitomised the lone inventor of the 19th century. "I could make anything", he wrote: "If there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one – and do it as easy as rolling off a log". In those days, new-fangledness was not frowned upon. The theme of the New York Crystal Palace exhibition, held two years after the Great Exhibition in London of 1851, was not science and art but "Cunning Devices". No wonder Americans became gadget addicts.

Ironically, all American patent models are useless. In 1836, when the law re-introduced inspection for novelty, the models that patent officers had begged as a hedge against defective drawings became obsolete - but compulsory.

By 1908 2,700 crates containing 155,000 unwanted models had been humped out of the Patent Office — where some display cases had been jammed shut with them — and dumped in a lively stable. That was after 86,000 had gone up in flames in two fires at the Patent Office. By 1926, 15,000 models bought by a dealer were being hawked from pushcarts on the streets of New York for 25c each, a photograph shows an Edison model among them. Fire claimed 15,000 more in 1943. They were part of a purchase of 110,000 by an auctioneer, O Rundle Gilbert, who traded in them. Mr Petersen bought Mr Gilbert's remaining 800 crates in 1979. He will research them before they are auctioned.

So who really wants American patent models? Not many, it might seem. But the market for Americana is booming and these have had Christie's curatorial skills lavished upon them. The sale's estimates total \$300,000-\$400,000. We shall see.

Inquiries: Gary Platton, Christie's East
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SPARKS! SELF SUFFICIENT Sexual Women, Late 40's, *sexual* *conf* and *man* with *sexual* *of* *her* *and* *her*

Hello? Cher? Whitney? Oh, Emma, hi

Top Hollywood agent Nicole David wants the very best for her clients. And she won't get off the phone until she's got it.
By Daniel Jeffreys.
Photograph by Richard Poley



It's 8am on a sunny California morning and Nicole David is on the phone. She's almost always on the phone. "Can you get me Cher and then call New York about Whitney," she says, guiding her \$100,000 Mercedes through LA traffic with one hand. "Then I need to talk with Gene about the scripts." David has already been on the go since 5.45am.

As she drives, the LA landscape slips by. Beverly Drive turns into Rodeo and then Wilshire Boulevard. Everything is movie-clean, especially the sleek building that houses the prestigious William Morris Agency on El Camino, just behind the Beverly Wilshire Hotel where Julia Roberts played *Pretty Woman* to Richard Gere's lost soul.

Roberts and Gere are not represented by David, but if they were they'd be keeping pretty good company. As a senior agent at the William Morris Agency she now has charge of a powerhouse client list - including Emma Thompson, Whitney Houston, Cher, Patrick Swayze, Roseanne and John Travolta. Nicole David is hot. A five-foot bundle of energy with a laughing smile, she is one of Hollywood's most powerful citizens.

On this sunny morning David has a problem. It goes with the territory. A hot young actress has got pregnant, just as her career was about to take off. Nicole can't get the starlet to come to the telephone, a most unusual occurrence. It seems the woman's boyfriend is screening all calls.

"I can't understand why some women allow a man to take over their careers but I've had this before, a client getting pregnant because she won't face up to the issues in her life. The last time it happened it was more difficult - the actress had just been nominated for an Oscar."

When I next see David she is running around a New York hotel room explaining her relationship with her clients ("I think you have to be in love with them, just a little and they will give you some of that back") before attending the premiere of *Waiting to Exhale*, which stars client Whitney Houston. She spends about a quarter of her year in New York and that means many

hours in airplanes. ("I get tired," she says, "but that would never make me give up. The only time I think of quitting is when all the game-playing gets to me. A year ago I couldn't get calls returned on John Travolta. Now everybody wants him. John hasn't changed, he was and is a fine actor. That makes me a little sick.")

As premiere time approaches, she's a little nervous. *People* magazine and *Entertainment Weekly* both have Houston front covers with negative articles inside. "The relationship with the client is like parenting," she says. "When this kind of shit happens it is upsetting. I know the person is not like this and I'll have to work with her so she doesn't take it too personally."

The telephone rings. Emma Thompson's on the line. David lowers her voice and a hushed conversation takes place. Thompson is a platinum property now and so David has a tricky problem. There are hundreds of projects on offer but she must choose which one will best allow Thompson to capitalise on her success.

"My job is to help the client understand their ambition," says David. "These are amazingly talented people but some can't define their dreams, others can get that far but then can't make the right decisions to get to the next stage."

David never stops. In New York, she makes calls constantly as we talk until it's time to meet another William Morris agent in the bar along with Deborah Chase, who runs Whitney Houston's production company. The three will go to Whitney's premiere together and plenty of business will be done through the evening. She's permanently on call for a client list that spans many time zones of potential trouble; David's weekends are spent watching movies and reading scripts.

At 11am on a Monday she's trying to make her reading bear fruit. New York has been closed by a blizzard so she has a little more time for problem-solving. She is discussing two young stars with a female colleague in Manhattan; both are at a delicate moment in their careers. "That would be just the

wrong project," she says, referring to one script on her list. "We have to find something that makes everyone aware how he's developed. I have no problem slashing his price to smithereens if it means he can do something big."

The conversation is three-way. David to New York from LA and, in her office, an assistant listens to every word, a special device on the phone silencing his mouthpiece. As they work the list. Steve signals and offers advice. His job is to have on hand all the information David could ever need as she works without pause. Outside the door there's Cat Carter, the other assistant who is planning David's schedule for months ahead.

"So you got an offer for \$1m?" she asks of New York. "Is that firm?" The answer is vague. "Get a clear fix on that, we can't do anything unless it's a firm offer." Which they often aren't. This being Hollywood, there are lots of variables and this million-dollar deal is dependent on the choice of director. In Beverly Hills speak that's not a "real" deal.

They move on, covering a list of over 50 potential movies. Struggling screenwriters should be allowed to sit in on the process. They'd find it's not enough to write a good script. The "project" has to surface when the right actors, directors and producers are in place to do the work. As David rejects script after script, she says many are great projects, they just don't match what the market and the clients need right now.

Back in the car and the telephone's glued to her ear. "When will Penny Marshall start to shoot? I know it was supposed to be today but there's too much snow." She makes a left-turn. "Anyway, I want flowers from us to Penny and I want flowers sent from Whitney to Denzel Washington." The film is *The Preacher's Wife* starring Washington and Houston, directed by Marshall. David wants the relationship between all parties to start and finish in good shape. Attention to detail. It's the first rule of agency work.

David admits that the personal lives of the stars can become a big issue. "I am in love with my client's work, not

them. I try to keep my distance from their private dramas but I'm right in there when a relationship makes an actor late for the set or makes him miss a casting call." Back in her office, she has to sort out a director who has rejected a client because he missed an audition. The excuse offered of a bad cold satisfies neither David nor the director but she does her best.

"If somebody is determined to fuck up I can't stop that," she says. "Actors are responsible for their own destiny. You can work as hard as anything but you can't prevent failure."

Riding success is a different question and David is now trying to repeat last year's golden harvest. Clients John Travolta, Emma Thompson and Patrick Swayze have all been nominated for prestigious Golden Globe Awards, which some say are Hollywood's "up-market Oscars". This presents its own problems. "If they all win, who the hell am I going to sit next to?" quips David. But the trickier question is which project each should accept next.

"It's all a question of how best to position the client to best realise their ambitions, given what we know about their talents." As she says this she tosses a script directed at Patrick Swayze into the waste basket. "That would be no good. It's exactly the kind of piece of shit which would really hurt him."

Emma Thompson poses fewer problems. If all goes well, her next project is fixed, so long as David can get Thompson to read the script. "She's resting now and hard to get hold of and she needs that but it's slowing something down. I just tell people they have to be understanding."

The success of David's list brings enormous power. She can influence how a script is written and she has often requested a movie be changed when she believes it did not do her client justice. That's why she goes to so many screenings and reads so many scripts. "I like to put out fires before they start," she says.

The agency business involves big money. The William Morris Agency, now ranked number two and climbing, is a private company. Sources say its

clients generated \$2bn dollars last year and at a standard agent's fee of 10 per cent William Morris would have earned \$200 million. But Hollywood is no longer that simple. With complex front-end and back-end deals, it's hard to judge what the agency makes. Informed experts say William Morris will probably bank over £275m for 1995.

The pressure is on for the agents to win, promote and keep clients. But not at any cost. "This is not a bad script," she says to one client on the telephone. "But the negative for me is the director and I say that even though he's one of our clients." With a flick of the wrist another script becomes bin-lining.

With her assistants, David goes back to working her "list", the three-page collection of telephone calls she just has to make so that Tinseltown can build more fantasies and make more money. "Look," she says speaking for one client. "I don't think you making an offer of \$5 million will move her. That alone won't get her attention and make her read the script. I don't need you to make an offer. What I need is for you to get a great director involved."

In one hour, David rebuffs a £5m offer, insists that a client gets to approve script and leading man, demands £6m for another client, rejects eight projects and gets on the case of a client who is causing problems. "She's way too self-involved which is not interesting," she insists down the phone. "She needs to get passionate about something. She's not another Emma Thompson so she needs to develop some other strengths."

David is now 54 and has been in the business all her working life. A high school drop-out, born in Canada, she began her career as an actress, appearing in *The Trouble with Girls* starring Elvis Presley. In Los Angeles, David met Arnold Rifkind, who was working as a shoe salesman. Combining her understanding of actors and his sharp business mind they formed a small talent agency: a series of smart moves brought them to the Triad agency, which William Morris bought three years ago. Both are now rich (Rifkind is now the worldwide head of the

agency's motion picture department and holds court on the floor above David). David is married to a successful defence attorney-turned-songwriter. She has no children. "I thought about having them for exactly one hour and that was just because the guy was so cute. I would not be good at having kids and I know having them would make me a worse agent. But the quality of mothering is used in every aspect of my work."

Arnold Rifkind agrees and says that's a key strength of David. "Men can identify types, like 'Suave Italian' or 'Rugged American' but they tend to ignore the less obvious. Instead of asking, 'What do the studios or networks want?' women spend time developing their clients' careers from the inside out. It's a great skill and Nicole is the master practitioner. In this business you are only as good as the people you represent and Nicole has made her people so much better by giving them somebody to trust."

Rifkind believes that David will be impossible to replace, if she ever retires. "When we met, Nicole really had nothing that would qualify her as an agent but then the industry was smaller, you could start something and make it succeed. Now with the dominance of big agencies there's a tendency to play safe, so the next generation of agents will all be lawyers."

Back in the car heading for Sushi in Santa Monica, David has barely pulled away before calling her assistants so they can connect her to the constellation of talent. "Close your ears," she says. "I have to tell a client he didn't get a part. It could get ugly." The calls continue all the way to the restaurant. By the time we arrive the client has been let down lightly and a new movie has been put into development. Not a bad day's work: it took 20 minutes.

As the Mercedes is valet-parked David grows philosophical. "Some people, like Arnold, they love chasing the deal. For me that is nowhere near the satisfaction of making a fantasy come true. After all, that's why they built this town - so crazy people would have a place to realize their dreams."

DICKIE
FANTASTIC
on the schmooze

Mr Motivator is there. How exactly does he plan to lead us into the 21st century?

As I walk into the grand opening of the "Leaders Into the 21st Century" photography exhibition at the Mall Galleries, I glance behind me and see Mr Motivator, GMTV's workout king, chatting away with June Whitfield over a glass of champagne. How sweet, I think, for them to be here with the rest of us to salute those who will guide our nation into the Millennium. And then I realise the truth: Mr Motivator, and the such, are part of the exhibition, too. They are, as far as Charles Green, the photographer, is concerned, our exemplary leaders as well. Yes, the list is diverse and very weird: Professor

Stephen Hawking and Faith Brown, John Major and Flowella Benjamin (*Play Away*). "How do you intend to lead us into the year 2001?" I ask Flowella.

"Well," she replies, "With a smile." "I must admit that I am very surprised to be included," confesses Jack Tinker, the *Daily Mail*'s theatre critic.

"Well," I say, "You are the *Daily Mail*'s leading theatre critic."

"Yes," he says, merrily. "That's very kind of you to say so. Yes. Thank you."

"Look," I say, "There's Betty Boothroyd talking to Bob Holness."

"I know," replies one of Mr Motivator's

party. "How the hell did he make it to the exhibition?"

"Well," I say, "He was the first James Bond."

"It's true," says Bob Holness. "I was the very first James Bond. On the radio. 1958. I did *Moonwalker*. *Way before Sean Connery*. Shhh. Here comes the speeches."

"Well," says the man from Kodak, the sponsor. "Kodak are proud to sponsor such a marvellous event, for we are leaders, too. Market leaders, leading you into the 21st century. Thank you very much."

There is applause.

"Well," says Charles Green, the pho-

tographer, "I'd like to thank Kodak and just say that Kodak Gold is the Rolls-Royce of camera film. And I'd just like to say one thing to Baroness Thatcher. I know why you've decided to make your big speech tonight at the Keith Joseph memorial lecture. It's sour grapes because you weren't asked to be in the exhibition!"

Mr Motivator, Flowella Benjamin and June Whitfield all applaud.

"Well," says the lady from the Haversham Trust for people with learning difficulties. "I'd just like to say one thing to all the famous people here today. Please come and visit us at our residential unit."

Our patients watch TV all the time and they love absolutely everyone on it."

There is applause.

"Order, order," says Betty Boothroyd. "I now declare this exhibition open!"

There is applause.

Suddenly the doors are flung open and a saintly - eerily familiar - sight wanders inwards. When I first see her, I think, a little oddly: "My God, it's my mother." But it isn't my mother. It is a celebrity who transcends celebrity. It is a woman who is so much a part of all our lives that it is almost like seeing ourselves wander into the party. It is Esther.

There is a hush. The cameraman from Channel One turns, as if hypnotised, to film her, but gets so close that he knocks Desmond Wilcox's glasses right off his face with his camera lead and they fly down the stairs. Esther grins graciously and puts down her handbag to help retrieve the glasses. The photographer from the *Evening Standard* rushes forward to get a picture and accidentally kicks Esther's bag, sending her private things flying across the carpet. Well all watch, mesmerised. Esther looks down and looks up at us all. It is as if time has frozen. Then she smiles, graciously, and makes her way into the crowd.

reviews

TELEVISION

999 Special (BBC1)

Unwatchable without brandy, a catheter and a coathanger, says Jasper Rees

Most of the 999's reconstructions can be survived with a box of tissues, suitable for mopping up sweat, tears and, in those rescues involving heights, blood. But this solitary prop would have been pitifully inadequate for the latest 999 Special. No viewer would have got through it without a makeshift survival kit consisting of a generous measure of brandy, a catheter and a coathanger.

By a bizarre coincidence these were precisely the tools used in this week's life-saving mission, in which Professor Angus Wallace operated mid-flight on Paula Dixon, whose lung was punctured by a broken rib in a motorbike accident just before she boarded a plane from Hong Kong to London. The professor used the brandy to sterilise the coathanger wire, which he inserted inside the catheter to guide it into the patient's chest and drain it of air.

The viewer, however, put the kit to more conventional use. The brandy performed its traditional role. The catheter allowed you to stay put during a programme that made fierce demands on the bladder. And the coathanger was just the thing for hanging up your preconceptions about a morally shabby programme.

As soon as the tale of Professor Wallace's extraordinary operation circulated the global newsroom, the team from 999 must have known this was the big one. It was a tough reconstruction, but performable. No previous rescue story can have been so well-documented, but then no other tellers of the tale had Michael Buerk on board. They flew him straight out to Hong Kong and converted him into a kind of Sophoclean chorus who commented on the narrative as it unfolded next to him. He even handed over the newspaper that Wallace used to pad the patient's arm splinter.

The participants, meanwhile, were doing their bit to compress, shape and tidy up a drama that, as real life can be, was just that little bit messy. "My name's Angus," said the helpful Prof, giving an otherwise realistic performance as himself, to his neighbour on the plane. Meanwhile, Paula found that her scheduled flight had no more smoking seats. It's not entirely likely she uttered the prophecy, "I'll never survive that." Still, a rare case of Smoking Saves Lives.

Operation Coathanger is such an extraordinary story that no amount of heavy-handedness could ruin it. Even the actress playing Paula for the operation gave a much more resonant performance than 999 usually delivers. Was that her chest wall you saw the scissors penetrating? If so, no wonder Paula chose not to portray herself.

Paula still has a phobia about coathangers, though otherwise she seems to have got off scot-free. When she flogged her story to a tabloid, it was because "This was my best way of saying thank you. As well as me making a little bit of money." Though not necessarily in that order. "I love them all," she said of her saviours, and ducked out of shot in a sudden attack of the sobs as the camera faded, the credits rolled and an invisible caption scrolled across the screen: made you cry.

OPERA The Makropulos Case, Metropolitan Opera, NY

It couldn't have got off to a worse start: delayed first by the death of a tenor and then by a snowstorm. But when Janacek's opera finally opened, it found Jessye Norman on top form. By David Patrick Stearns



Jessye Norman: glamorous, but still able to convey Emilia Marty's emotional weariness

Photograph: Winnie Klotz / Metropolitan Opera

Even before its debut production at the Metropolitan Opera, Janacek's *The Makropulos Case* had an air of evil luck: at the performance on 5 January, the tenor Richard Versalle, singing the role of Vitek, dropped dead from a heart attack in the first scene, prompting immediate cancellation. The 8 January performance was cancelled by the worst snowstorm to hit New York in 48 years. Some viewers refused to return on 10 January. "Are you kidding?" one superstitious critic told me. "I wouldn't go near that place."

Such sentiments – which weren't isolated – indicated how Versalle's public death was profoundly disquieting, breaking the theatre's "fourth wall" with an unexpected confrontation with one's own mortality. That's ironic considering it's an opera that tells us to welcome and enjoy mortality. Its central character – diva Emilia Marty – has been denied death by an arcane formula that's kept her alive for three centuries. The result is a person who lives with nearly unimaginable levels of cynicism, loneliness and impatience. Janacek characterised such emotional states vividly with a score full of his characteristically feverish ejaculations of rhythm, shorn of the ingratiating folk influences found in other operas and deployed with a swiftness that allows the piece to approximate the speed of spoken theatre.

It's tough on all fronts, though Elijah Moshinsky's production brilliantly established a believable context for this odd plot by treating it as a *film noir* with stylish but cloyingly designed by Anthony Ward, clearly inspired by vintage Fritz Lang movies. Marty begins as a familiar film type – a flamboyant woman of mystery, moving with feline grace, wearing leopard-skin gloves and maintaining inscrutability behind sunglasses. When Marty

confesses her past in the final scene and chooses death over another dose of the formula, the production becomes fuzzy. Moshinsky tried to give it a *Don Giovanni* style, ending with an enlarged rendering of the formula going up in flames around Marty. It seemed contrived and clumsy.

Musically, there were a number of clumsy moments as well. Though conductor David Robertson etched long musical arcs, the Met orchestra lacked a sense of authority. Even in a singable English translation, the score sat uneasily on the non-Czech cast, though there were successes where one would least expect them. The great Wagnerian character tenor Graham Clark (as Albert Gregor) was the only one who really cracked it, though Donald McIntyre, a seasoned Wotan, came close with his superbly enunciated characterisation of Dr Kolenaty.

The role of Marty reportedly caused Jessye Norman much anxiety, which is understandable considering that her large, lyrical voice just wasn't built to sing Janacek's rhythm, and much of Act 1 lies in the weakest part of her voice. Still, she had some fine musical moments in her final confession. And even if she's too ladylike to swirl whiskey convincingly, it was one of her most effective acting efforts. Though she could hardly look more glamorous and delivered the character's arrogance with good, bitchy humour, Norman showed the character's emotional weariness and physical frailty from the earliest scenes. That made Marty more integrated, intriguing and human – a remarkable feat for a character based on a superhuman idea.

Details: 001-212-362 6000

THEATRE Erections, Ejaculations, Exhibitions

Paul Taylor goes for a quiet evening out at the Islington Old Red Lion

Just opened at the Old Red Lion, a double-bill cryptically entitled *Erections Ejaculations Exhibitions* and *The Suck Machine*. As we reviewers often say: even if you don't have a child to take along, just go. Only kidding. On the other hand, I'd be loath to describe this unsurprisingly packed-out production by Canada's Way Off Broadway Theatre Company as an entirely adult entertainment. "Graphic images of sex... but no actual sex", commented a man perusing the poster on the way in. "Images of sex, sex – amounts to the same thing these days" was his friend's rueful reply. It proved to be one of the evening's wittier and more up-to-date remarks.

Adapted from the writings of the (dead) Beat poet Charles Bukowski, the show starts off with a frank look at the ups and mostly downs of the relationship between Harry (superb Michael Schaidemose) and Connie (Deb Pickman), a couple of alcohol-abusing losers. "Ya no, I do well on the sex quizzes," is gravel-voiced Harry's chat-up line in the nervy seduction scene. He shows her a Polaroid of an ejaculating penis and, when she's been encouraged to evince sufficient wonder at it, he solemnly admits it's his.

Things start to get vicious when Harry emerges as a greenhorn in the cunningling department. He contemplates the task with the strained expression of a man who, having just lost his dentures, is then confronted with an ducking-for-apples contest. A man's dream, he confides "is a whore with a gold tooth and a garter belt" who is prepared to do the dishes and only stay a week. Precariously balanced between being an indulgence and a critique of that attitude, *Erections* shows Harry eventually shacking up with a department store mannequin, just as the second piece climaxes, so to speak, as two violent hobos resort to the eponymous machine on the grounds that, with it, there's "no cortex, no shit, no arguments".

The in-your-face intensity and comic flair of the acting and of Michael Wener's production goes some way towards compensating for the depressingly conventional underlying thought. The seedy mosaic of murder-rape-and-necrophilia fantasies in the second half does, however, provoke one or two intriguing perceptions. There's a scene in which a down-and-out who is forced by his criminal sidekick to "prove that he's a man" by forcing another man to give him oral sex. A paradoxical proof, I'd have thought. A woman is, in some senses, lucky she doesn't have equivalent equipment whereby she can "prove she's a woman" – but then, when you change the gender in that phrase, its inherent absurdity is quickly exposed.

The show won't win many fans for Bukowski's verbal skills. There's the odd bit of dexterity, as in the antiphonal exchange in the first piece that plays around with various meanings of "feeling like": "I feel like we ought to pay the rent", "I feel like going on for ever", "I feel like you could" etc. Indeed, it sometimes felt like they could.

Booking: 0171-837 7816. To 10 Feb

EXIT POLL Seven

Critics have raved about it: Sheila Johnston thought it would be in her 1996 top 10. But what do cinema-goers make of the serial-killer death-fest?

CYNTHIA MURRAY, 29, ADVERTISING REP

I wouldn't normally come to this kind of thing; I tend to stay away from these gruesome films. I suppose I only came because Brad Pitt was in it, but it really is amazing, and he's proved himself a good actor.

BRIAN HOLMES, 35, RETAIL MANAGER

It really takes you over; towards the end you're gripping the armrests and shrinking back in your seat. It's rare to see something that absorbing; yes, it's a fantastic film.

MARK DEERING, 27, INVESTMENT BANKER

It's got to be the best film I've seen in a long time, probably because it's genuinely shocking. This type of thing's usually so predictable, but you never quite know where this is going to go. They end it brilliantly.

PRIYA GUREWAL, 20, STUDENT

Despite all the unpleasantness, it was terrific. I thought it was a really dark, bleak film, though it has just enough touches of humour to get you through the gloom.

CAROLINE LAPPER, 22, NURSERY NURSE

The tension's almost unbearable. It's really clever the way it just shows you bits and pieces – photos and stuff – and you end up wanting to see more, even though it's all really grim. I suppose that's what makes it so good.

MICHAEL BALFORD, 39, CIVIL ENGINEER

I really liked it, and I'm pleased because it's been so hyped up. I thought I might be disappointed, because you so often are with these things, but it turned out to be fantastic. Genuinely worth seeing.

MARIA HURST, 28, SALES ASSISTANT

I'm quite shaken up, actually: it's all rather stomach-churning, but you can't help but be impressed by it. I came with my boyfriend, and I suppose it's not really a "date" film, but, yes, it's very, very good, even if you tend to feel queasy in parts.

SEAN BECKETT, 23, ACCOUNTS CLERK

The best thing is that it never cops out. It goes for the downbeat option all the way, and it works. It has to be one of the most gruesome films I've ever seen, and that's not a criticism.

AARON MASTERS, 21, STUDENT

It's great, and it seems to have everything: good story, character, dialogue, music. It's most effective in the parts where they're finding the bodies, and the camera's searching frantically around; you're wondering what exactly they're going to find. It's nasty, but it's all brilliantly done.

GEOFF WRAY, 41, PLUMBER

It's hard to sum it all up, really; it just gets to you. I think I need a drink now. It's not because it's gory – actually they don't always show you

that much – so I suppose it's more to do with the way they tell the story. And it's a good story.

ELAINE MACDONALD, 32, WORKS FOR A PUBLISHING COMPANY

Morgan Freeman's always excellent, and I suppose it's the best thing Brad Pitt's done. It all looks really good, too: all the rain and the grime really adds to the whole effect. All rather dark and depressing, maybe, but I guess that's the intention.

Interviews by Scott Hughes

Where opera comes alive

BIZET

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THE WEEK IN REVIEW
David Benedict

THE PLAY
PETER PAN

overview JM Barrie's classic, usually wheeled out with a supernaturated actress in tights, in a new production by Matthew Warchus, designed by Rob Howell and starring John Padden.

critical view Jeffrey Wainwright was captivated: "The wonder of Rob Howell's overall design... John Padden's excellent Peter... just go." An actor whose facial expressions mysteriously hint at some unearthly, elemental force, marvelled the Times. "Bravura staging, a pretty big adventure", applauded the Independent on Sunday. "Warchus's dream-like production", cheered the Telegraph.

on view At the West Yorkshire Playhouse (0113-244 2111) until 3 Feb.

our view An accompanying child is not a necessary requirement for this excellent piece of theatre. Children will, however, love it.

THE FILM
SHOWGIRLS

Joe Eszterhas became Hollywood's highest paid scriptwriter with X-rated tale of Naomi, a lap-dancer who dreams of timeless success without sacrificing integrity. Of course.

Adam Mars-Jones voted it worse than the same team's *Basic Instinct*: "All About Eve remade by Paul Raymond." "Peppered with lines you cannot believe survived the wastepaper basket... scrapes bottom in all senses," gasped the FT. "A miserable folly," groaned the Times. "Disma!" concluded the Telegraph. "Most depressing film of the year, and it's only January," opined Time Out.

At a cinema near you... but not for long.

THE CONCERT
JOAN RODGERS

The penultimate pair of concerts in the Wigmore Hall's mammoth The British Song series included his Pushkin setting The Poet's Echo, sung by Joan Rodgers.

Anthony Payne was utterly convinced. "Joan Rodgers' interpretive subtleties are perfectly matched at the keyboard... an evening for both artists to recall with satisfaction." A recital of untiring interest and reward, agreed the Guardian. "A sophisticated, highly intelligent, flawlessly artistic presentation," eulogised the Times.

Hot young talent Ian Bostridge sings the final concert in the Wigmore Hall British series (0171-935 2141) on 24 Jan.

Another triumph for London's finest concert hall. If you've never been, check it out immediately.

A black hole in fiction

When space exploration is in the ascendant, science fiction takes a dive (and vice versa). Now after 'Apollo 13', the ultimate real-life space drama, how do the writers fight back? By John Gribben



Star warriors: left to right, Tom Hanks in the 1995 film of the real-life Apollo 13 mission, and Dan Dare, the intrepid space ranger from *Eagle* comic, prepares for battle

When there is a wave of activity among the writers of space fiction, you can be sure of one thing – the real manned space programme is in trouble, or at least suffering a hiatus. The great days of science fiction were in the Forties and Fifties, with writers such as Robert Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke, the magazine *Astounding*, Dan Dare, and *Journey into Space*. Space was mysterious and exciting, a canvas broad enough to encompass the speculations of even the most vivid imagination. But in the Sixties people actually went into space. By the end of that decade, men had walked on the moon, and, for many, the magic went away.

John Clute, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, has called this intrusion by the real world "the profound tragedy of science fiction." Starting with Sputnik, which smashed the theatre of space, things were never the same again. Many SF readers experienced almost a sense of *déjà vu* when the moon landings actually happened, coupled with a sense of anticlimax. In Britain, in particular, a new kind of science fiction, the "New Wave", was developed by writers such as J. G. Ballard and Michael Moorcock, probing the "inner space" of the mind rather than the outer space of the universe.

The New Wave label was first applied (borrowed from cinema's *nouvelle vague*) in the late Sixties, and the material to which it was applied often had dystopian elements, a disillusion not just with space but with what was happening on Earth as well, that persisted right through the Seventies.

Elsewhere, the backlash against space fiction took different forms. The hugely successful *Star Wars* trilogy, released in the late Seventies and early Eighties, might look superficially like space fiction, but is really just cowboys and Indians in space, mindless entertainment (nothing wrong with that, but if there is one thing good SF is not, it is mindless) that never – unlike, say, 2001: *A Space Odyssey* – addresses deep issues.

Of course, there were exceptions to the antipathy about space engendered in many writers by the moon landings. Doris Lessing, for example, says that the Moon still retained its romance for her, in spite of "pompous remarks" about taking a giant leap for mankind. But then, perhaps she is not a typical space fiction writer: "I didn't know I was writing space fiction at all. It never crossed my mind that I was writing space fiction until some magazine said 'she's muscling in on our act'. 'Well, well', I thought. 'So I'm writing science fiction, am I?'"

The attraction of space for Lessing (who began to muscle in on the act at the end of the Seventies) was, and is, the opportunity to let the imagination roam free, where nobody can say "That creature does not exist," because any creature the writer imagines *does* exist. But for writers more firmly embedded in the genre, it was when space became unfashionable again that they let loose their imaginations on its rebuilt stage.

It was a combination of this freedom and a deliberate desire to do something different from the New Wave, taking SF back to its roots, that provided the impetus for the best British writer of space fiction today. In the worlds of Iain Banks (or Iain M. Banks, as he signs himself when authoring SF), there are no chains on the imagination.

Deliberately reviving the old idea of Space Opera (the SF equivalent of horse opera, not of Covent Garden), he portrays a future in which Arthur C. Clarke's prediction that "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic" has come true. Not for him the nitty-gritty of how rockets work, nor any dystopian visions warning us of the error of our ways. Instead, Banks grasps the opportunity to roam the galaxy, using all the special effects of space opera to portray his

own vision of Utopia, the future in which he would like to live.

And all this has been happening, from the mid-Eighties onward, against a real world background of a faltering manned space programme, disillusion with the once mighty Nasa in the wake of the Challenger disaster, and the gloomy analysis that, as of 1990, it would not have been possible to replicate the Sixties feat of putting a man on the moon, and bringing him safely back, before the end of the decade – not so much because we lacked the technology, but because we lacked the political will.

So what do we find Banks and the other writers of space fiction up to? Plugging the gap, of course. As the prospects of a manned expedition to Mars faded into the far distant future, the early Nineties saw a wave of gritty, realistic novels about the colonisation of the Red Planet, with the most gritty and realistic of all the portrayals probably being Ben Bova's *Mars* (1992). Deeper into space, Gregory Benford, a physicist who also writes fiction, has picked up Arthur Clarke's baton, writing about possible futures in which the colonisation of space is carried out by scientifically plausible (although technologically advanced) methods.

All in all, it looks as if we are build-

ing up for a golden age of space fiction. But there's a cloud on the horizon. Disturbingly, for fans of the genre, Nasa seems to be getting its act together again. The combination of man and machine in space that led to the triumphs of the Hubble Space Telescope has raised morale, while the collapse of the Soviet Union has provided a new partner with complementary skills, not least some brute-force hardware for launching massive payloads into space. The international space station looks as if it really will go into orbit, and there is talk, once again, of an expedition to Mars, if not within my lifetime then perhaps within the lifetimes of many people around today. The success of the film *Apollo 13* is another substantial straw in the wind, as real-life space heroes (more or less) take over from the lantern-jawed space rangers of fiction.

It's obvious what this will mean for science fiction. A retreat from space,

back into the mysteries of the inner mind, while the romance is taken away from the Red Planet, as well as from the moon – and the rest of the universe is tarred with the same brush. Iain M. Banks will start writing introspective psychological studies. Gregory Benford will go back to being a scientist full time, and there will be a new *Star Wars* trilogy. Sometimes, it seems the world would have been a better place if Nasa had never been invented.

But there is a temporary silver lining. There is always a lag between developments in the real world and the response of the writers, and this inertia is still, for now, bringing us the benefits of a new wave of excellent space fictions. Make the most of it, in case the wave is about to break.

John Gribben is the presenter "Space Fictions", which begins on BBC Radio 4 this Tuesday at 2 pm.

Bonfire of the Biedermeiers

Robert Winder reads a riches-to-rags tale by the protean creator of Dame Edna Everage

Novelists are often asked, as they tour the bookshops promoting their work, where on earth they come up with their ideas. Most of them shrug modestly and say that there's no simple answer. But Barry Humphries – whose first novel is a mirthless comedy about the marital misadventures of an Australian drag artiste – will hardly be stumped for a reply. The man behind Dame Edna has written a book whose central figure is a cross-dressing comedienne called Mrs Petty, a "puritanical but hilarious housewife". Blimey, readers will mutter – how the heck did he think of that?

Mrs Petty is the stage persona of Derek Pettyfer, and the novel follows his romantic ups and downs. He has a pretty bad time of it: his ex-wife bad-mouths him to a biographer; his new wife has naughty flings with everyone she meets; and his agent has taken him to the cleaners financially. Luckily, none of it is very serious – Humphries has gone for a lampooning style that doesn't ask us to care much what happens. And the emotional drama hides its light under a lavish catalogue of fashionable objets.

"When people have been more than usually disappointing," runs the epigraph, "we turn with an added tenderness to things." Pettyfer has a collector's devotion: whenever he enters his flat he strokes his Piranesi (note the plural); and he also likes – until his vulgar new mother-in-law puts an £85,000 antique into the dishwasher – to fondle his pieces of Roman glass. He is a fastidious

Women in the Background
by Barry Humphries
Heinemann, £14.99

aesthete – quick to sneer at an "over-framed" Chagall – who always notices and mocks the pictures on other people's walls. Not all of them can afford Piranesi, the dim fools.

Humphries also surrounds himself with designer accessories – a "magnificent" scarlet Sulka bathrobe, a Patek Philippe watch and a catwalk-full of clothes by Jaeger, Yves St Laurent, Bruce Oldfield, Donna Karan et al. Someone even sports "a top-of-the-range, 18-carat, red enameled Cartier AIDS awareness ribbon." It's like reading an in-flight magazine. Even the dentist collects Biedermeier and Lalique.

Of course there is a satirical purpose to all this, but even so, Humphries isn't very sarcastic about these perfumed connoisseurs (all of whose scents are named); and he seems happy to serve up references to London's artsy milieu as if it added glamour to his unhappy story. Pettyfer's flat contains sculpted busts of Mervyn Bragg and Martin Amis. And he can't go into a restaurant without mentioning who else is there ("Derek walked among the tables, saying a word to Alan Bates and another to Peter Hall"); sometimes he even drops the names of absentees: "Derek sat at a corner table... a table at which he had often observed Sir Harold Pinter and Lady Antonia Fraser." Sir Harold Pinter? Is this all



Humphries: his alter ego spends the book surrounded by designer accessories

set in the future? The prevailing preoccupation with status symbols is clearly part of the joke, but it's a hard joke to get. In a way, it's quite a cunning parody of your classic bodice-ripper: riches-to-rags instead of rags-to-riches. In place of someone sleeping their way to fame and fortune, we have a celebrity on the skids. But this is no bonfire of

the vanities: the tone of the book, its sarky enthusiasm, is set against this sense of decline. A lot of the time, it looks merely like a record of Pettyfer's conquests in disguise. If he invites a receptionist to lunch at the Ivy, the odds are that she'll bring along some slinky leather-and-chrome harness for after.

At the emotional climax, when Pettyfer returns from an advertising shoot in Antigua to find that his wife has been pursuing three dangerous liaisons, he realises that he cares more about the decor of his flat: "Reluctantly Derek brought himself to acknowledge the most painful bereavement of all. Alas, the above horrors would appal him far less than were he to discover that Pam had installed strip lighting in his house or resurfaced the floor with black Pirelli rubber."

It isn't that this is unkind; rather, the satire doesn't cut deep enough. Greedy vacuous types are presented as greedy and vacuous, and the result is a flattened-out, catch-all sneer at the vulgarity of life in the fast lane. Still, there is a sweet ending.

Long ago, Pettyfer's first and truest love has given him a book about Piranesi as a parting gift. It was a perfect present, but he has never got over the absence of anything like a farewell endearment to go with it. Now, years later, someone returns the book, and out flutters a card saying: "With all my love, Yvette." It's not much (indeed, it's barely plausible), but it hints at a deep emotional logic that is never pressed. A properly broken heart, after all, can never be fixed.



Still crazy after all these years... With *Leaving Las Vegas* poised to sweep the board at the Oscars, Nicolas Cage talks to David Thomson about the demons that drive him

Plus: Geraldine Bedell on an East End morality tale of race and violence

And how to win the holiday of a lifetime in South Africa

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

All you need to know about
the books you meant to read



by Gavin
Griffiths

This week:

A HOUSE AND ITS HEAD (1935)
by Ivy Compton-Burnett

Ivy Compton-Burnett produced 19 novels between 1925 and 1969; laceratingly funny, they are written almost entirely in pungent, aphoristic dialogue and detail the struggle for power within extended families. Plots are melodramatic—adultery and incest lurk behind the mannered exchanges.

Plot: Duncan Edgeworth uses avarice to bully his family. His wife, Ellen, tries to placate him; Sybil, the younger daughter, flatters him; only Nance, the elder daughter, balks at his tyranny. Duncan's nephew Grant stands to inherit the estate. Within the opening chapters, Duncan harries his wife to death. Showing little remorse, he visits his rich sister to "recuperate". The family have scant time to celebrate before he returns with a new wife, Alison, who is young and beautiful.

Alison is swiftly bored by Duncan's petulance. She is seduced by the nephew, Grant, and gives birth to his child. Sybil informs her father that the boy is Grant's. Duncan divorces Alison but informs Grant that the boy will inherit. Grant marries Sybil. Peeved at losing out on the house and the money, Sybil arranges for Grant's bastard son to be gassed in an "accident". Grant guesses the truth and banishes Sybil. Duncan remains in the dark.

Sybil goes to live with her rich aunt. Duncan marries the long-suffering ex-governess who promptly becomes pregnant. However, Sybil is no longer concerned about heirs because the aunt dies, leaving her a packet. Only if she can return to the family will she share her fortune, Grant agrees. Blackmail and infanticide forgotten, Sybil is welcomed back into the collective bosom and normal relations are resumed.

Theme: The abuse of power. Characters with money/status appeal bully those who lack all three; but the underdogs have the verbal dexterity to outfox their tyrants and assert some independence. The bald Edwardian setting is a laboratory to demonstrate that family life exists well outside the moral boundaries of respectable society.

Style: Dialogue is pervasive. Chat is both awkward and sinuous, the language abstract yet mercilessly precise. The dearth of visual imagery highlights the maddening clash of voices.

Chief strengths: The characters lack "internal" lives but are compelled to articulate their desires and frustrations. Human personality is shown as the sum total of what you see and hear.

Chief weakness: Kingsley Amis pointed out that a Compton-Burnett character could never say, "You bore me," or "What a pretty dress".

What they thought of it then: The book reinforced Compton-Burnett's status as a major novelist. Virginia Woolf admired and feared "the bitter truth and intense originality" of the work. Later, Nathalie Sarraute welcomed Compton-Burnett's post-modernist challenge to the interior monologues of Joyce and Proust.

What we think of it now: Patronised as an ailing relative of Jane Austen and Henry James. Despite Hilary Spurling's intelligent biography, Compton-Burnett is a victim of senseless literary fashion. At the moment, *A House and its Head* is out of print.

The hundred and one flirtations

Flamboyant, ambitious and highly-sexed, Dodie Smith was more than just a shopgirl turned dog-lover. By Philip Hoare

Dear Dodie
by Valerie Grove
Chatto, £20



Left: Dodie Smith at the window of her Essex cottage after the success of *The Hundred and One Dalmatians*. Below: a still from the Disney film

From the beginning, Valerie Grove's book delights with detail. Dodie Smith's Manchester childhood is replete with eccentric bachelor uncles and aunts, and a grandmother who publishes a polemic against "the enforced education of the masses". The background is important, for in her most notably successful play, *Dear Octopus*, Dodie would recreate her family, "that dear octopus from whose tentacles we never quite escape". Throughout her life, Dodie strived between happiness and despair, and her enviably empathetic biographer states at the outset her subject's early "masochistic tendencies—creating miseries out of unusually happy circumstances".

It was a propensity for self-analysis which would undermine the principal successes of her life. Endlessly documenting her travels in morocco-bound journals, Dodie refused to let things just happen; they needed to be examined under the microscope. "I'm convinced it's hopeless to start out as the heroine of everything one writes," she wrote, but this was indeed the case. And, like her heroines, independence determined Dodie's existence. She represents a particular type of literary woman born in the late 19th or early 20th-century: emancipated by the First World War; vari-talented, vivacious, ambitious and sexually liberated.

Valerie Grove beautifully evokes the period in which her heroine's adventures are set: her provincial experiences in the theatre after Rada, touring towns filled with theatres as yet unconverted to cinema, with fellow aspiring actresses all named Bunty, Boogie or Boo. The unassuming, diminutive Dodie stood out, if only for her

eccentric dress, sporting a turban with an 18-inch feather to give her extra height.

Despite, or perhaps because of her plainness, Dodie was determined to take advantage of a newly-permissive era: a series of lieutenants and theatre agents represented a melodrama of her own making, all duly written up in the journals. In such dangerous flirtations, she was "a rather daring adventuress" when feeling good about herself; "a nasty, silly creature" when abashed by how far she would go in search of sensation. Dodie's eventual deflowerer was Norman MacDermott, who ran the Everyman Theatre in Hampstead. She sought seduction in his Camden Town flat, but found the experience unsatisfactory; when it was over, she couldn't bear to ask for the lido, and had to walk to Tottenham Court Road to use one in a café which was full of dwarves. It was an

episode so surreal that her later friend (and literary executor) Julian Barnes considered using it in a novel, but thought it might be too unbelievable.

Having given up acting, Dodie went to work at Heal's furniture store, where she set her sights on Sir Ambrose Heal himself. She became the boss's mistress, at the same time pursuing a steady relationship with a fellow assistant, Alec Beesley, with whom she would live for ten years before marrying. It was a flagrantly permissive act as she had meantime become Britain's most successful female play-

wright. The Tyrolean romance of *Autumn Crocus* was raucously received on its first night, and followed by a string of decorously daring dramas, as Dodie was acclaimed as "shopgirl turned playwright". Her dramatic career peaked with the now perennial *Dear Octopus*, but that play's "end of an epoch" quality signalled a curtain on the inter-war period, and on Dodie's career. In 1939, she decamped to America in deference to Beesley's conscientious objections, and bitterly regretted the move ever after, attributing her subsequent lack of dramatic suc-

cess to having missed wartime Britain and the "copy" it would have furnished.

In Hollywood Dodie made a lot of money out of writing scripts, and became intimate with John Van Druten and Christopher Isherwood. Her relationship with these two gay writers is illuminating. Van Druten was an appalling idealist, stealing unashamedly from Dodie and Isherwood both; she eventually grew tired of his plagiaristic ways. Her friendship with Isherwood lasted, despite being endangered by Isherwood's penny-pinching and his boyfriend's greedy consumption at her supper table. Isherwood encouraged Dodie to drop her letter-writing and get on with her first novel, *I Capture the Castle*. Inspired by the lives of the Tennant sisters, Laura and Margot, it was a perfect flight of fancy. Mirrored and yet with Joyce and Proust as its "forefathers", the result



of Dodie's desire to become a "serious writer". That desire was superceded by a spotty dog and an inordinate (some would say indecent) love of animals. In 1934, Dodie received a hatbox containing a Dalmatian puppy, black and white to match her Heals interior. Pongo proved a photogenic accessory, posing decoratively in the theatre stalls (until one day the seat folded in on the hapless pup).

It is a mark of Grove's good writing that even the most cynical readers will find themselves caught up in the emotional highs and lows of Dodie's doggy obsession. It was the source of the one work for which she will be remembered: *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1954) was born out of a remark by an actress friend who thought Dodie's latest puppy "would make a nice fur coat". The novel would keep Dodie in the manner to which she had become accustomed: a scriptwriter friend sent it to Walt Disney, and knowing he would never read the whole book, directed him to the scene in which the fugitive puppies disguise themselves in soot. Disney bought the rights for \$25,000.

The rest is history, though for Dodie, it meant a slow but decorative rural decline in her Essex cottage at Finchingfield, increasingly cut off from the human world and surrounded instead by dogs, pigeons, feral cats and mice (though she did conceive a late passion for the Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* album). The immortality of her book is confirmed by news that a live action remake of *Dalmatians* is on its way, to the disgust of the British Dalmatian Club who fear that renewed popularity of the breed will weaken its genes. I'm afraid Valerie Grove's utterly delightful book will do the Club no favours, either.

Nazi in a nightdress

The German prima donna was a strategic fan of the Third Reich. Even her salary was arranged by Goebbels. Dermot Clinch investigates

Rarely can so unadventurous an analysis of artistic success have been offered as in the preface to this biography. "Two words" explain the rise of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf to the top of her profession, we are solemnly told. And those words are "talent" and "ambition". Schwarzkopf, 80 last year, "nurtured the seed of talent which had been born in her, willed it to flower through sheer, determined hard work, and sought no alternatives in life except those that would help it bloom even more richly."

It's a fine, floral tribute. The phrase "sought no alternatives", though, smacks of euphemism. Schwarzkopf's talent can be taken for granted; but she wouldn't have got where she did

without being bloody-minded with it. In *Die Fledermaus* in Paris in 1943, Schwarzkopf damaged the scenery with a flying shoe after being demoted to a non-singing role. In Berlin with the Deutsche Oper, the young soprano impressed with her insouciance as much as her voice. "I'm still in my night-dress", came the mid-morning phone-call, as she excused herself from rehearsal. The "night-dress excuse" became something of a joke in Berlin musical life.

For their part, the management of the opera house scrawled "ungrateful and lacking in respect" on her official reports. Even so, Schwarzkopf got ahead. She knew which side her bread was buttered, as Alan Jefferson

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf
by Alan Jefferson
Gollancz, £22.50

who admires his subject, regretfully informs us. In 1935, aged 20, Schwarzkopf enrolled as *Führerin* in the Nazi Students' Association. In 1939 she became a full member of the Nazi party, swearing on oath that she had no taint of Jewish blood. In 1942, and no doubt well before, she was signing her letters "Heil Hitler!"

The singer's contracts show the President of the *Reichsmusikkammer* himself, Goebbels, taking personal care of Schwarzkopf's salary. Later Goebbels

employed her as an actress in his film industry, and a carefully vague suggestion hints that their relationship may have been even closer. Certainly Schwarzkopf knew there was shame attached to her past, lying repeatedly about it to the allied authorities.

How handy it is to have friends in high places is a theme of this book. Herbert von Karajan was Schwarzkopf's protector. Even more importantly so was her husband, Walter Legge, recording manager of her company, HMV, and their relationship gave rise to some of the great recordings of *lieder* and opera of the last fifty years. Legge, a "streetwise" Londoner of great musical acumen, went to Austria and Germany immediately after the war

to sign up the best artists, Nazi or otherwise, for his company. He found no dishonour in promoting von Karajan long before the conductor was cleared of Nazi entanglements.

Ultimately, of course, it was neither Legge nor her own sometimes suspect *nous*, that saw to Schwarzkopf's success. Her musicality was huge, even if her voice wasn't. Her husband nurtured her critical intelligence, dictating her interpretations precisely, until her scores were thick with red directions to herself and her. Singing sounded sometimes mannered. Not that she seems to have lacked self-confidence, though: the flipside of severe self-criticism was severe self-admiration. For a Desert Island Discs programme

in 1958, seven out of eight of Schwarzkopf's choices were recordings of her own voice.

In the end, though, biographies of singers, like biographies of Bordeaux chateaux, are pale reflections of the real thing, using a language which is often just as curious and inbred. The singer's voice will, one knows, be termed at some point "the instrument". Recording will be "upped a notch and get called "committing to disc". Statements about star quality ("which you either possess or you don't") will find their way in. Connoisseurs are this book's only possible readership, for whom all the scandal and the nice, retrospective distinctions will be a thrill. To anyone else the advice is simple. Don't read. Just listen.

Lanterns and lovers on a passage to Paris

Julian Barnes is always an intelligent writer, but his new stories are sexy and affectionate too. By Michèle Roberts

Crossing the Channel has long signified for English people our version of passage rites, initiation into the grown-up pleasures of good food and wine, sophisticated sex, witty conversation, and a different way of life, to be eagerly anticipated or dourly sniffed at depending on our particular blend of puritanism and nationalism. Our ambivalence about the crossing has inspired many a sub-plot in our literature, has created many a comic-tragic character, pulled in both directions at once.

The Channel crossing can also stand as a fine example of the imagination at work. We throw out our mind-lassoes into the

unknown, and rope in creatures whose names we don't know, who introduce a touch of wildness into our minds. We voyage into the darkness and take risks, all for the sake of adventure. We learn to speak new languages. We allow ourselves, in the hurry-burly of forgiveness, to be transformed. This is a daily, human necessity, not confined to writers or lovers.

Julian Barnes's new book of stories functions like a gift, to remind us of this. His writing demonstrates the billowing lightness of imagination, like a magical tent suddenly springing up, and also the desire to observe very closely and learn about the beloved object, as though seeing it for the first time. Reading these stories, you perceive and love France afresh.

This is the Barnes book I've most enjoyed. It's characterised by the intelligence, irony and wit you associate with his writing, but is also suffused with feeling, deeply seasoned with affection. The relaxed but total confidence

Cross Channel
by Julian Barnes
Cape, £13.99



Julian Barnes: pure *jouissance*

of the story-telling is expressed through the narrators he employs. Whether first or third person, ruefully amused or compassionately involved, they are in

complete command of their fictional worlds, well-travelled in the land of words, urbane, not given to showing-off, adept at puns, fond of jokes. Rather English, in fact.

His theme allows Barnes a wide variety of voices. Being able to speak French comes to stand for possessing the talent of a ventriloquist, plus the visionary sympathies of a seer. Barnes seems just as happy giving voice to a 17th-century heretic in the peasant society of the Montagne Noire as he does to a 19th-century bourgeois doctor or an early 20th-century baker in the Marne.

"Dragons", the only story in the collection to be narrated solely from the French point of view, gravely impersonates the silences and sufferings of the Huguenot villagers set upon by the cruel foreign soldiers employed by the Catholic church to enforce its doctrines. As the story opens, Pierre Chaigne is making a lantern whose four sides of glass are set upon runners. The

stubborn heretic, bent on surviving the horrors visited upon his family, has also cut three pieces of beechwood the exact size of the panels of glass. When these were inserted, the flame would be cast in a single direction only. Pierre Chaigne puts the pieces of beechwood at one end of his workshop. At the end of the story, in which he speaks only once to ask why, he takes his lantern, inserts the pieces of beechwood, then follows the light of his truth: "The yellow beam of his lamp reached tremblingly towards the forest, where the other obstinate ones waited for him to join them in prayer." This beautiful and moving story works through simplicity and understatement, its brutal facts calmly set down.

Barnes can be very funny too. The charming tale of Uncle Freddy's embroilment in the practical sex research of the Surrealists uses French puns and misunderstandings to give several twists to the old double standard which used to insist that only men were

curious to experience lots of different lovers. The delicious Aunt Kate, not quite as pure as Freddy likes to make out, may, we gather, have had the last of several laughs. The sexiest writing is nearly always comic at the same time, thus saving itself from purple prose. This story is a star example. It detonates in the reader's imagination just after its closing lines. Pure *jouissance*.

Barnes writes about women with interest, tenderness and sympathy, as being truly the friends of men. He gets close up to his women characters in an affectionate and relaxed way. These qualities are exquisitely demonstrated in my favourite story, "Hermitage" concerns both wine-making and the retreat from the world. Florence and Emily find their joy in the Medoc, setting up home with each other and rescuing the vineyards of a chateau fallen on hard times. The denouement, both sweet and sexy, is like the *Song of Songs* crossed with Colette. *Encore*.

Audiobooks



Whisky Galore
read by Stanley Baxter
The Dark Room
read by Saskia Wickham

To abridge or not to abridge? I had no problem at all with the shortened version of Compton Mackenzie's *Whisky Galore* (BBC Radio Collection, £7.99). It gives far more of the original than the film did, and read by Stanley Baxter with a Hebridean lilt so authentic that it had me pinning for a cellid, it provided more sniles per mile than any tape I've so far test-driven.

But the abridged version of *The Dark Room*, the most recent of Minette Walters's macabre thrillers (Hodder Headline, £7.99) is a disaster. Although very well read by Saskia Wickham, the severe pruning of the subplots, red herrings and carefully laid clues does no justice to Walters's consummate skill in plotting, and the sudden denouement left me quite bewildered. In this case, it's worth going the whole horrific hog, and quaking with fear to the excellent full-length version read by the very vocally versatile Patricia Giffmore (Soundings, £37.95).

Christina Hardyment

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Bye-bye, baby

A kidnapped child, a deal with God and lots of Irish guilt. D.J. Taylor reads a striking debut

Mary Morrissey's first novel is a triptych on the theme of the divided self. Based on the ancient fictional conceit of the stolen child, it examines the event from the point of view of the kidnapper – a childless woman, inevitably enough – the mother, and the child itself. Each protagonist comes weighed down with a substantial freight of sinister interior baggage.

For Irene, who stalks purposefully into a Belfast maternity ward and abstracts the contents of an unguarded cot, the roots of obsession lie in illness. Struck down with TB at the age of 18, six years in a gruesome sanatorium, survivor of a ghastly operation which seems only a parody of caesarian section, she emerges as the wife of a silent, credulous man named Stanley, first encountered over his mother's death-bed. Stanley turns out to be impotent; neighbourly gossip is increasingly censorious. No objection having been raised to the baby who arrives in Irene's charge one afternoon, the two conceal the theft for four years, until a revenant from the old hospital days, calling by chance on his rounds as a travelling salesman, guesses the truth and calls the police.

The story shifts to Rita, mother of "Baby Spain" (the case becomes a national *cause célèbre*), a gauche and impressionable teenager whose infatuation with a likely-looking cinema usher results in pregnancy and a forced marriage. Psychologically unbalanced even before the trauma of the empty cot, conducting her life through a series of divine bargains ("he could even take Mel if she could have her baby back!"), Rita takes up ballroom dancing and conceives a second child with her demure Italian instructor. Her husband's death in a bungled terrorist execution is a working-out of the spiritual contract. Even so, when the authorities arrive with news of the baby, Rita's guilt-ridden response is to scream: "I haven't done anything!"

Something more of Rita's embattled character and capacity for deception is revealed in the monologue of her daughter, which takes up the novel's third section. Brought up to believe in the existence of a "lost" third baby, Mary

Mother of Pearl
by Mary Morrissey
Cape, £9.99

recreates her sister as "Jewel," a familiar who accompanies her through adolescence. Married to a police photographer, Mary discovers Jewel to be infinitely preferable to the real foetus in her womb and does something very unfortunate with a knitting needle.

Morrissey's eerie taste for backstreet Grand Guignol informs several of the strokes in her 1993 collection, *A Lazy Eye* (Vintage, £5.99). Awash with menstrual blood and symbolic denouements, they reach a macabre height in "Rosa," which climaxes in the substitution of a real baby for the ornament of a department store crib immediately before closing time on Christmas Eve. Like the stories, *Mother of Pearl* is variable in quality. Part One, while excellent on the ground-down atmosphere of the TB hospital, is over-written; Part Two, by contrast, seems an immensely subtle psychological portrait; while the first person narrative of Part Three is a touch clumsy and prone to let too many cats out of what is by now a crowded mental bag.

One sees what Morrissey is trying to do in some of her more fervent passages, and the kind of symbolical fan-fares to which she aspires, but the result sometimes verges on the effortful. Thus, when Irene journeys to the hospital, "The bus was a beast driven. It buckled and swayed, wipers clinging gamely to its snout. Granitefield stood in a stretch of grizzled countryside, seeping grey stone...giving way to barred, teeth-like windows. A few trees rose supplicant from the dun-coloured fields..." To balance this is a densely evoked Irish atmosphere of rain, tension and unhappiness, with The Troubles always lurking dangerously in the background. *Mother of Pearl* won a Lannan Award (\$50,000 and no questions asked) on its recent publication in America, but for the moment it is easier to discern promise than accomplishment.



A carved wooden bust, sightless eyes and unfeasible amounts of headgear greet the visitor to Lawrence Durrell's house on the edge of Sommières in the south of France, whither he moved in 1965 to write and paint and play jazz piano. It's one of a hundred entrancing photographs by Erica Lennard in "Writers' Houses" by Francesca Premoli-Droulers published just before Christmas (Cassell, £25) and features the dreamily luxurious domestic interiors of 20 authors, from Karin Blixen's severe Danish manor house to Yeats's blessed and beautiful Thoor Ballylee. Turn the pages and die of envy.

Falling in love with the High Table heroes

Susie Boyt reads a first novel by a noted academic in which even the minor characters have PhDs

Barbara Hardy, Professor Emerita at Birkbeck College and Honorary Professor at University College, Swansea, has achieved international acclaim for her pioneering studies of Victorian fiction and for her work on the novels of Jane Austen. It comes as little surprise that her first novel is an intensely literary affair.

London Lovers is a richly textured, multi-layered unfolding of a life devoted to love and work. It follows the professional and romantic career of Florence Jones, from young Welsh bride to London sophisticate, from student to professor of Eng. Lit. The book has a loose structure, spilling out episodes, observations and memories, constantly turning on itself as it weaves from future to present to past with no obvious rationale, except perhaps a commitment not to exclude anything, a form of openness which makes the experiences described seem unusually authentic.

After a modest upbringing in South Wales in the Thirties, where her aunt refuses to read her a bedtime story because she is "no scholar", Florence marries Charlie Jones, the boy next door (their wedding breakfast consisted of "Sherry and port and beer and ham sandwiches"), finishes her thesis and gains an academic post at London University. In her new milieu, friends and lovers meet on lecture tours, at High Table, at conferences and at academic parties where the Lowells and the Spenders are glimpsed. This is a novel in which even the minor characters have PhDs. Gradually Florence takes on some of the characteristics of her new worldly environment, displaying a cool detachment towards herself and her own behaviour, treating her life as a form of experimental text, having a go at infidelity to see what it feels like, casually allowing her marriage to fail, not because it is a bad one but because the idea of being married no longer seems to suit her. She moves in with a lacklustre man ("He was quite a good mathematician I was told, but kept his intellect for his maths") but comes back to Charlie and attempts to mend the marriage with children.

London Lovers
by Barbara Hardy
Peter Owen, £15.50

Yet unlike many of the women in the novels she studies, marriage is not an ending for Florence, but a false start. Her realisation that she does not wish to be married gives her a new beginning, so that by the time she meets Mick Solomon, distinguished American academic and husband of the invalid "horrible Ellen", she is able to build herself the kind of permanent love affair that allows her an intense and passionate involvement while maintaining a bed of her own.

Hardy's novel veers between a gossiping ease and surprising and austere moments of intimacy: Florence's meeting of the new Mrs Jones for the first time at the hospital bedside when Charlie is dying; her poignant examination of the effect of the death of the old love on the life of the new love affair. The impact of each man shapes Florence's attitude towards the other. "Siabod was Charlie's favourite mountain. The very idea of Mick having a favourite mountain was ludicrous," she tells us.

At regular intervals throughout the book, Florence refers to an unfinished novel she wrote years before, about the same set of characters in which she used her husband's middle name for the surname of her lover and left out her spinster aunt who had gone into service. These references give the actual text an odd sort of integrity, creating the sense that what she did choose to write is especially deliberate. We might have had to settle for a version in which Aunt Mary was left out because her life was too sad, but we were undeceived at the last moment. This device raises questions about the kind of treatment experience has to undergo in order that it can become fiction. More than a passionate telling of two different ways of loving, this is a novel about writing.

Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst



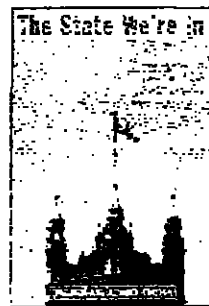
The Lost Treasures of Troy by Caroline Moorehead (Phoenix, £10.99)

Absorbing biography of Heinrich Schliemann, who set the world agog in the 1860s by unearthing a golden hoard in Asia Minor. It was from the legendary city of Troy – though the discoveries predated Helen by 1000 years. Despite his brutal excavation methods, Schliemann was acclaimed "father of pre-history". Held as Russian booty in 1945, the artifacts are only now reappearing.



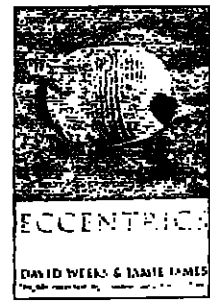
It Came from Memphis by Robert Gordon (Secker, £9.99)

Fruity, irresistible yarns about unsung heroes of the rock and roll city, ranging from blues legend Furry Lewis, supplied with whiskey by the author in breaks from school, to wrestler Sputnik Morgan (catchphrase "I'll jump in the air and shit in your hair"). Lynchpin of the local music scene is Jim Dickinson, who opines: "Hits are in baseball, singles are in bars and your royalty lives in a castle in Europe."



The State We're In by Will Hutton (Vintage, £7.99)

Richly meriting its success, this book is a tonic. Hutton starts with an informed *tour d'horizon* citing the short-termism and pocket-lining which characterise our market economy. Worst of all is the idea that high unemployment is immutable. The solution is Keynes's "cooperative capitalism" along with constitutional reform. Hutton's cheering view is that Britain has "a remarkable chance to change itself".



Eccentrics by David Weeks and Jamie James (Phoenix, £6.99)

This entertaining defence of the zany combines academic research and journalistic anecdotes. Some stories are familiar, such as Berners's pastel-dyed doves and Firbank consuming a single pea at a banquet, but did you know that director Ed Wood wore a pink bra and panties throughout his war service? Eccentrics turn out to be less mad than the norm, but this book fails to explain why they tend to be extremely right-wing.



Voices of the Old Sea by Norman Lewis (Picador, £5.99)

Though first published in 1984, this wonderful book recalls a period just after the war when Lewis lived in a poor fishing community in north-east Spain. Retentive, dignified and austere, the villagers clung to old ways, improvising blank verse and observing medieval ritual. But this ancient idyll was doomed. The barbarian, clutching suntan oil, was at the gate. Keen-eyed and pellucid, it is Lewis's finest work.



The Orange Tree by Carlos Fuentes (Picador, £6.99)

Whether it's the Spanish in Mexico, the Romans in Spain, or the Californians in Acapulco, Carlos Fuentes loves the historical complications thrown up when two worlds collide. Four thematically-related novellas in which Aztec kings, Hollywood stars, and even Marks & Spencer sales assistants, stalk the blood-red horizon with equal gravitas.



Coconuts for the Saints by Debra Spark (Faber, £8.99)

Set in the candy-coloured streets of old San Juan, Sandrofo's bakery is the town's meeting place for those with a romantic turn of heart. But for the baker's triplet daughters, Tata, Melone and Beatriz, a life sandwiched between coconut kisses and shell-shaped cookies leaves much to be desired. A first novel it's hard not to like: everyone and everything in it tastes so good.



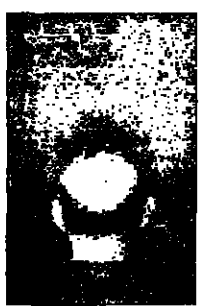
Making it Work: Women, Change and Challenge in the 1990s by Sue Innes (Chatto, £10.99)

A woman shepherd may have won *One Man and his Dog*, *Star Trek* may have divested itself of gendered language, and Kirsty Wark may front *Newsnight*, but, wonders Scottish journalist Sue Innes, have women's lives really changed for the better in the last 25 years? Most women (who are probably too overworked to read this book) will already know the answer.



Jack the Modernist by Robert Gluck (Serpent's Tail, £8.99)

With chapter-titles that sound like they've come out of a Woody Allen film – "My friend Bruce gave a housewarming party", or "Saturday began with a letter from Brian" – Robert Gluck's new novel tells how Bob falls for Jack (his red chamomile shirt, gyrosopic nipples and herbal toothpaste), and how it all ends in tears in Leon's Soul Food restaurant.



The Wig My Father Wore by Anne Enright (Minerva, £6.99)

The man who appears on Grace's doorstep asking for a cup of tea turns out to be an angel – an angel with a celestial smile and a glittering crotch. He paints her walls white, fills the cupboards with Angel Delight and hovers comfortably above her head as she sleeps. He even takes a kindly interest in her dying father's wig. One of Ireland's more surreal offerings.

Who's reading whom?

Stephen Bayley, design and style guru, is picking his way through the debris of two tumbled reputations of the 20th century



[find myself reading two books that have a curious similarity: Kenneth S. Lynn's *Hemingway* (Harvard) and Richard Webster's *Why Freud Was Wrong* (HarperCollins). Both of them not so much deconstruct as demolish the reputations of their subjects. Hemingway, the tough-but-sensitive hero with a cause, becomes a craven braggart, capable of facing bullets but incapable of facing up to himself. Freud, who told us to know ourselves, traduced science in a self-serving quest to find data to support his whimsical and smutty convictions about the sources of behaviour. When figures of the stature of Hemingway and Freud are so icily scrutinised, you wonder about our contemporary need to disinherit ourselves. That's why they're such good books.

Reader offer

The Poetry Book Society was founded in 1953 by TS Eliot to encourage the art and publishing of poetry. Under the successive chairmanship of Eliot, Stephen Spender, Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin the society has blossomed and grown – and set up in 1993 an annual prize in its founder's name – but the basic format of membership remains unchanged. Members receive four new poetry books each year, selected by the PBS, receive a quarterly Bulletin and are offered 60 new titles at substantial discount. Craig Raine is of the opinion that the PBS offers "the best introduction to British poetry I can think of." *Independent* readers have an opportunity to join the Society at a discounted rate of £20 (members pay £30) and the first 10 applicants will receive a complete set of books by the shortlisted poets for this year's TS Eliot Prize. To join, simply ring the Poetry Book Society for a membership form (0181 870 8403) quoting "Independent Offer".

country



The railway/
A5 wildlife
corridor
near Milton
Keynes
Photo: Nicky
Wheeler

Milton Keynes: wilder than you thought

Yes, yes, there are concrete cows. But now MK is attracting birds, butterflies and otters. By Tony Kelly

Nicky Wheeler is a woman with a mission. She wants otters to return to Milton Keynes.

You might think that the closest you would get to wildlife in Milton Keynes would be the much-ridiculed sculpture of concrete cows, but you would be wrong. Since development began in the Sixties 400 acres of woodland have been planted; a fifth of the city is taken up by green space.

There are more species of wildlife in Milton Keynes than there were 30 years ago. "I saw a deer and a pheasant on my way to work today," says Nicky, "and people in city-centre offices see hares leaping out of hedges."

As for otters: "They used to be here years ago, and you still find them on the Ouse in Bedford and Buckingham, so I'm sure they'll be back soon," Nicky enthuses. "Otters travel long distances to find mates, but they need quiet areas to hide and rest along the way, among bramble or scrub or beneath overhanging trees. A lot of trees have been cut down on the riverbanks, leaving fewer areas for other holt. By building log holt on the river's edge, covered with branches like enormous bonfires, we can encourage otters to come back."

Nicky is project officer for the Milton Keynes Wildlife Corridor Project, which aims to identify and

protect corridors for wildlife throughout the city. A corridor is just what it says, a green link between larger areas of habitat. It could be a river, stream or hedgerow, an embankment, a footpath or even a road.

"The best wildlife corridors are those which are continuous, and contain several different habitats to encourage different species," says Nicky. Most of these are in the city rather than the surrounding farmland, where intensive arable farming has left islands of ancient woodland surrounded by fields.

"Once habitats are isolated," she explains, "there are too many pressures on small wildlife communities. Droughts, floods and fires can be disastrous and there is lowered resistance to disease because of inbreeding. Corridors enable plants and animals to colonise new sites if they feel threatened. Foxes and badgers can move very quickly, but a corridor may have to support a butterfly community over several generations."

Not everyone is convinced. "It's difficult to find proof that corridors work," says Dave Dawson of the London Ecology Unit, who has carried out a study of wildlife corridors for English Nature. "Some species need them, like frogs and toads who need wet and dry land at different times of year and wouldn't survive in a pond surrounded by concrete. But it's

probably only a minority of species - though probably those most in need of conservation.

"As a scientist, I would like to see more research, to find out which species use them."

Nicky Wheeler accepts the need for research but is impatient to act now. "The dormouse is in national decline," she says, "and has died out in Milton Keynes. They tend to move along the tops of hazel trees without coming down to ground, so they need a continuous line of treetops."

Then there is the marbled white butterfly. A few years ago there was only one known site for it in the city, now there are several on the embankment beside the main London-to-Birmingham rail line. "We think it has spread along the railway corridor," she says.

The first task in protecting corridors is to identify them with the help of technology. "We began by looking at aerial photographs for an overview of where the green spaces are, then narrowed it down to exclude short-mown grass and non-native plantations - otherwise all of Milton Keynes could have been labelled green," says Nicky.

By way of illustration we look out of her office window in Campbell Park to see a neat cricket pitch, and green space as far as the eye can see. Yet we are only a mile from central Milton Keynes. This is a city with the fastest population growth in Britain - more than 40

per cent in the Eighties - and the extra houses and cars all add to the pressures on wildlife.

"We identified 21 key corridors, such as rivers, the Grand Union Canal, brooks, streams and the railway," Nicky continues. "I spent the long hot summer out of doors surveying the sites, to chart the main habitats - woodland, grassland and so on before putting the information on computer."

On the wall of her office I look at the result: a computerised map of the city superimposed with areas of habitat in different colours. You see a corridor of woodland beside a river, then you spot a gap which needs to be bridged. Funds and volunteers permitting, bridging these gaps is the next stage of the work.

One of the key corridors lies along the Ouzel Valley, much of it within one of the city's parks. We leave the car near the old village of Simpson and walk towards the river. We pass an old paddock, ancient hay meadows, wide double hedgerows and a lake covered in willow and reed beds. A pair of herons swoop over the lake as if on cue. "Come back in spring and the air will be thick with butterflies," promises Nicky.

A few miles away, by the same river, we stand beside an old Roman road, now named the V4 (V for vertical) in Milton Keynes' grid system. It doesn't look promising - a boarded-up pub, a

factory, a garden centre, sports fields. But even here there are things that can be done. "Those playing fields have cut grass all the way to the riverbank," said Nicky. "Just moving them a few yards in could provide a hiding place for otters. And the riverbanks are too steep, like canals - they need to be gentler and wider. And that poplar plantation - if you mixed in some oak and ash you'd have more diversity." She is like a detective, looking for clues wherever she goes.

"We've got the advantage in a new city that green spaces were planned from the beginning, and development is still going on so we can influence it from the start," she says. "But I really think this can be used as a model for urban development elsewhere. Milton Keynes shows how you can start off with an intensively farmed landscape and create something much more diverse. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a national network of wildlife corridors?"

"It's all about planning for diversity," she adds, "and explaining to developers how to maintain wildlife links. I think development can be used in a positive way. There's no automatic conflict between conservation and development."

Milton Keynes Wildlife Corridor Project can be contacted on 01908 201567.

A regular supply of different foods is what garden birds need to help them through the winter

By Anna McKane

Crumbs from the Christmas table may make the difference between life and death for small birds at this time of year. So give that reproachful piece of Christmas cake at the back of the cupboard to those who really need it.

Cakes, puddings and old mince pies are all ideal for birds, as they contain nuts, fats and fruit. A regular supply of different foods is what garden birds need to help them through the winter, as Chris Harbard of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds recently explained to me.

Scattering a few crumbs on the lawn when we remember it is not going to be of much use and it is no surprise that those of us who do that see only sparrows and fat wood-pigeons. A variety of foods will attract a variety of birds.

According to Mr Harbard it is important to put food out every day, first thing in the morning. The birds will soon learn to come for it at that time, and they will be able to feed without wasting too much energy, a major consideration when the weather is very cold.

Grated cheese or cheese rind is good, so the remains of the Stilton can join the pudding. Hardened cooking fat, especially if some wild bird food is stirred into it while it is warm, is another favourite. Packets of wild bird mixture give a good variety of food, and peanuts in a dispenser are useful at this time of year as they have a high fat content.

Mr Harbard's speciality of the house is chicken carcass, or chicken bones hung from the trees in the garden. Quite apart from the aesthetic considerations, it would have to be brought in at night, otherwise you might find you are providing for a family of rats. It is a hard world out there, but I for one draw the line at helping feathered friends by stringing up the bones of their dead cousins.

A bird table provides safety from cats, and if properly designed will prevent squirrels from taking peanuts meant for the birds. You can build a platform on a post or in a tree, or a table can be bought by mail order from the RSPB or from a garden centre. Avoid the rather twee thatched cottage style, as the birds will remove the thatch to build nests.

The best ones have a platform for pieces of food, and a plastic or wire dispenser for nuts and seeds. The ones with roofs will stop the food going soggy. It should not be too small, (about three square feet is ideal), otherwise the



birds will fight rather than feed.

Make sure there is always a supply of clean water, not just for drinking, but also for the birds to bathe in. They need to do this, even in the coldest weather, because clean feathers provide better insulation.

A bird-friendly garden will also have berrying shrubs such as holly, pyracantha and berberis. Holly and other dense evergreens provide cover for small birds to roost at night.

Now is also the time to think about nest boxes. They should be put in position soon, so that birds can get used to them, ready for when they start inspecting sites next month.

There are two basic types: those with a small hole in the front are for tits, and those with an open front are for robins and wrens. There are also artificial house martin nests on the market, which can be placed under the eaves. House martins can be difficult to please. They tend to nest in colonies, and certain types of brick do not seem to appeal to them. There is a theory that they prefer to nest under dark-painted caves.

Wrens will sometimes roost overnight in nest boxes during the winter, and 40 wrens have been sighted crammed into one nest box. They will nest in boxes, too, but as the male has to build three or four nests, and show them to his prospective mate for her to choose from, the box may be abandoned in favour of another site. It is a hard enough life for a small bird to find one suitable site, let alone four. So it is no wonder that, according to the RSPB, a wren has been seen nesting in a pair of underpants on a washing line.

The RSPB will send free information on looking after wild birds: RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. Their marketing arm issues a free catalogue which includes details of tables, nest boxes and food: RSPB, PO Box 54, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire DE14 3LQ.

A little local trouble

A weekly round-up of rural rumpuses

And Teresa Gorman MP thinks she has problems with the planning authorities. Spare a thought this week for 13-year-old Samson Greenhalgh, as he faces the next round of a war of words with East Dorset District Council in Wimborne.

Four years ago, Samson began to build a tree-house - a wooden platform four feet off the ground and six-feet-square - on land belonging to his parents' pub at Sixpenny Handley, Dorset; and for an only child who had just moved to the village, the "house" soon became an invaluable aid to making new friends. That is, until last September, when acting on a tip-off from residents of a neighbouring trailer park, the district council ordered him to seek planning permission or demolish the structure.

After protracted wrangling, the council has now hinted that a dash of green paint and a few structural changes may make the "house" acceptable. The catch? It looks likely to cost £160 in application fees. Next week: Tree-house Boy in Negative Equity Shock.

He flattened the buildings, cut down the trees and left with a six-figure profit. So why could no one stop him?



DUFF
HART-DAVIS

At the southern end of the Cotswolds, spurs of hill run far out into the plain, with deep valleys striking back into the high ground between them. On one such spur there stood, until recently, an enchanting little group of buildings.

Level fields crown the hill, and woods cloak its steep flanks, so that the tapering strip of farmland on top seems far removed from the world below. The only means of access for vehicles is a rutted track, which meanders a mile or more from the interior.

In this high and lonely setting, there was once a farmyard. When I first knew it, 10 years ago, a handsome barn stood at the upper end of the yard, more or less intact, and down the left-hand side ran a line of stables and cowsheds. At the bottom, forming part of a third side, was a two-storey structure with a hayloft on the upper floor.

The buildings were made of local stone, bleached to a pleasing light grey by years of wind, rain and frost. Walls of the same material divided the fields, forming wind-

breaks, and on one side of the farmyard, behind the stables, was a double column of splendid old beeches, whose silvery trunks matched the colour of the stone.

The barn was still being used to store hay and straw, but the stables had fallen into decay. The yard was by no means suited to latter-day agriculture, being too small and too far away from any other centre of activity, and yet, even though it had no practical future, it formed an attractive feature.

I saw it as potentially a wonderful place in which to live. There were drawbacks, of course - no electricity, telephone line or mains water

within miles, and no proper access. Almost certainly the local planning authority would have refused permission to convert the barn into a house. All the same, the mere existence of the buildings kept the dream alive.

Then that 100-acre block of land changed hands. For several years the new owner tried to build a house, not around the barn, but on a virgin site a few hundred yards up the fields. Happily, he was frustrated, not least by the fact that a rival landowner demanded an exorbitant amount of money for passage across an intervening neck of ground.

Nothing, however, stopped him destroying the dilapidated old yard. First the barn was bulldozed out of existence, the stone carted off and sold. Then the beeches were cut down. The sheds, stables and hayloft soon followed suit. Finally, as if to obliterate every trace, the new owner scooped up trailer-loads of soil and dumped them on the site, levelling the earth to make the old yard part of the field. Today, one would hardly

know that buildings or trees were ever there.

The developer's next step was to start demolishing the field walls and selling the stone. The effect has been to open the hilltop to the winds and leave it looking like a blasted prairie. Finally, he was able to sell the whole block of land at a grossly inflated price - £3,000 an acre, nearly double its agricultural worth. Having laid the hill to waste, he left with a six-figure profit.

I am not suggesting that in any of this he broke the law. I merely point out that there seemed to be no means of stopping him. It makes me livid that, for all our planning regulations, for all the plethora of protective bodies that now seek to preserve the countryside, one man can wreck the landscape solely for gain.

No matter that the hill lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. No matter that it is designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area. Part of its character has gone for ever - and the same thing is happening not just in my backyard, but over the length and breadth of Britain.

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Verbier: there's some good news and some bad news

In the course of my December tour of major Alpine resorts I paid a visit to Verbier. Waiting for me at the tourist office there was a strongly worded letter from the director, Patrick Messeiller, objecting to these criticisms of the resort. I am, he says, wrong about dreadful queues, wrong about piste crowding (except at weekends), and so on: it is all a "preconception" on my part. It's not, of course - I've checked the files and verified that the reports from last season's holiday skiers, on which these criticisms were based, are real and not imagined. I concede that snowmaking has improved, although it's still

By Chris Gill

My correspondent's visit was, I admit, confined to only a single week which could have been an exceptionally bad one. I'll certainly arrange for another correspondent to visit in high season this year, if I can't get there myself—but we may be unlucky again. So I invite readers' help. If you visit Verbier this season, let me know what you think of the skiing, particularly the lifts and the density of skiers (and boarders) on the main pistes in the Atellas/Ruinettes area. The three most detailed reports (which does not mean the three most critical) will earn a copy of the book I edit, *Where to Ski*.

A head start for a quick getaway

Colin Brown and his wife flew from London City Airport to Geneva for a weekend of skiing

Our flight was by jet – an Avroliner RJ85. There was the added bonus that there were only 10 people on the Friday morning flight, giv-

The weather was warm, the air soft, and the saddle hard as a knife. In winter the route doubles as a cross-country ski track, and

A detailed map of the Alps region, showing the borders of France, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy. The map highlights the Alpine mountain range with a jagged line. Key cities and towns are marked with dots and labeled: Zurich (Switzerland), Geneva (France), Lyon (France), Morzine (France), Verbier (France), Chamonix (France), Courmayeur (France), Val d'Isère (France), Courchevel (France), and Davos (Switzerland). The map also shows the Adriatic Sea to the east and the Ligurian Sea to the south. A scale bar indicates 50 miles. An inset map in the bottom right corner shows the location of the Alps within Europe, with a box indicating the area shown in the main map.

Returning on the Sunday night flight, there were double the number of passengers. Nevertheless, that still gave a ratio of 20 passengers to three air hostesses. It was like having an executive jet more or less at your disposal. Clearly, this sort of exclusive arrangement is usually intended for business pas-

Once in the air, the service was just as smart as before. The pilot even came down the plane with the

We were told the problem was that London City Airport is not fully equipped to cope with fog. The Airport denies that. In the pre-war days, people would have lit barrels of oil to burn off the fog, but the airport is fully equipped with an

Colin Brown flew with Crossair, booked through Swissair. His return economy fare including tax was £151. Swissair also booked a car for him through Budget at Geneva at a cost of about £30 a day.

Colin Brown flew with Crossair, booked through Swissair. His return economy fare including tax was £151. Swissair also booked a car for him through Budget at Geneva at a cost of about £30 a day.

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By Chris Gill

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Blair and Clarke: are they by chance related?

No politician shifts a society single-handed, by sheer force of personality. The trick is to spot the trend, sense the mood of a society, capture it, mould it, describe it, and then claim the credit for it.

That is what Margaret Thatcher did in the Eighties. In an era that saw the world opening up to global competition, her advocacy of free markets, privatisation and lower taxation were of the moment and defined that moment. As a result, "Thatcherism" gained hegemony in the country and eventually succeeded in converting her political opponents in the process. It spread throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, Europe, Asia and the post-Communist states. This was an extraordinarily successful exercise in divining and appropriating the Zeitgeist.

But what next? The struggle to differentiate Britain's main political parties - creating blue or red water between them - demonstrates the lack of a fresh Big Idea. We are halfway through the Nineties, with no new map to plot our course. This week Tony Blair and (making a comeback) Margaret Thatcher set about changing all that. They offered themselves as cartographers of the decade. The Labour leader went to Singapore and sent back a message that a "stakeholder society" was the way forward for Britain. Meanwhile, Baroness Thatcher returned to the legacy of her guru, Keith Joseph, and set out her two key ideas for the Nineties: shrinking the state and creating an anti-European Little England.

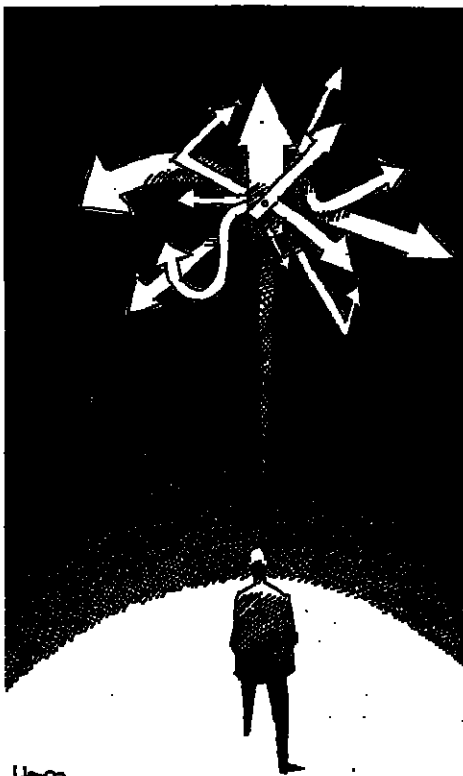
These ideas are desperately vague. It is hard to know what a stakeholder society means: Mr Blair, perhaps deliberately, has done little to

resolve the confusion. It is just as difficult to know how Lady Thatcher would achieve her ends, which have until now been beyond British politicians. In power, she herself committed Britain to its present involvement with Europe and failed to reduce the level of national income spent by the state.

Yet vagueness is not necessarily fatal to new ideas. When Margaret Thatcher took office in 1979, she did not have a grand plan; she had a basic set of principles that chimed with popular opinion and were to underpin the specific policies of the following decade. The vital question is: do any of these ideas, or aspects of them, strike a chord today? In 10 years time, will they, like Eighties Thatcherism, be big enough to label an era?

Mr Blair's stakeholder society, for all its haziness, certainly resonates. Commentators have been intrigued by the word. The notion of everyone having a stake in society makes sense. It seems to describe an inclusive country, in which everyone has roots and a say over what happens. We need these notions at a time when competition and globalisation are tearing apart the glue that holds society together.

Jobs for life and the traditional welfare state are both under threat. They are increasingly seen as expensive luxuries at a time when flexible workforces and low taxation, financing a minimal state, are said to be the key to maintaining competitiveness. As a result, social cohesion - vital for stability and economic productivity - is in danger as crime rises and an underclass of the disadvantaged and disaffected develops. Britain,



along with other countries, needs a way of building a humane society in a global era.

But there is plenty of suspicion that the stakeholder idea is no more than a repackaging of failed Labour policies. It invokes the idea of empowering groups or individuals who have claim to be included in decision-making. But if Mr Blair merely intends to reinvigorate the power of trade unions and other institutions that ran the corporate state of the Seventies, then he has made a big mistake. Indeed, even if this was not intention, Mr Blair may have made a political error in resurrecting Labour's old ghosts.

He has also, by implication, associated himself with a body of literature about stakeholding in companies that says businesses should be run not only in the interests of shareholders, but of customers, employees, consumers and suppliers. This may sound wonderful in theory, but over-regulation could stifle business and enterprise in much the same way as Labour's last failed exercise in "economic micro-management" - nationalisation.

In short, stakeholding may have nothing to do with the trends of the time, which are towards deregulation, free markets, individualism and increased competitiveness. But there is one version that might catch on, namely the notion that everyone should have their own individual stake in the welfare state. That could mean compulsory saving for state-overseen pensions schemes, vouchers for education and perhaps even new ways of establishing rights to treatment in the NHS.

If this is what Mr Blair means, then he may

be on to a Big Idea, albeit a controversial one, that could prove politically impossible to implement. It would convert the welfare state into a system that was socially inclusive, but did not necessarily guarantee equality and which paid out more on the basis of lifetime contribution than need. It would represent a marriage of choice with collectivism, of self-reliance with state support, while giving people a greater sense of owning their entitlements. And it would permit a shift away from conventional taxation, to claims by the state being earmarked for specific purposes.

If this is the direction in which Mr Blair is moving, there are good grounds for believing that his ideas will have a wider resonance. Indeed he will find plenty of fellow travellers on the Tory left. Much of what Mr Blair has to say about social inclusion and economic pragmatism echoes the language used by Kenneth Clarke. "The pace of change has created fears and uncertainties among men and women in every walk of life. A strong welfare state has an important role in reducing these fears." So said the Chancellor in his Maastricht 18 months ago.

In short, the chief British political divide may not be between Labour and the Tories, but between the Blair/Clarke philosophy - Blairism - and Margaret Thatcher (and her acolytes), who this week made her bid to be the architect of the next decade, just as she was of the last.

Who will win? We cannot be sure. But the ideas that will triumph and eventually engulf all parties will be those that best ensure our survival in today's global, competitive market.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A&E wards: conditions that take a toll on doctors' morale

From Dr Julian Eyears
Sir: I strongly disagree with your assertion that junior doctors should be "press-ganged" into working in Accident and Emergency departments (leading article, 11 January).

I spent six months in two casualty departments in south-east London and I would rather resign my profession than do it again.

Notwithstanding being twice assaulted by patients I was trying to help, having the door of my treatment room kicked in by a man angered by the fact that my dying patient had jumped the queue ahead of his broken finger, and my writing table taken away by hospital management on the grounds that the doctors were "spending too much time writing". I was allowed two weekends out of 11 free, and was almost always working anti-social hours.

The stark reality is that not enough doctors wish to work in the NHS anymore, especially in A&E. A significant number of my contemporaries have been so disillusioned that they have left medicine altogether.

Your leader demonstrates a public misconception: that doctors are some sort of breed

apart of medical soldiers, ready to be drafted into any situation. Doctors are actually human beings. They have loved ones, emotions and outside lives. They don't want to work in A&E because the conditions are frequently so inhuman that they take an unacceptable toll on their private and professional lives.

Yours faithfully,
JULIAN EYEARS
London, SW2

From Dr E. E. J. Martin
Sir: In your leading article (11 January) you fail to mention one of the major factors leading to a shortage of accident and emergency junior doctors in England - the great shortage of doctors training to be general practitioners.

The Royal College of General Practitioners encourages GPs in training to do six months in A&E. However, the number of doctors training to become GPs has fallen by nearly 25 per cent over the past few years.

Recently, more surgery is carried out on a day-care basis, with a patient being discharged on the same day as their operation. Large psychiatric hospitals are being closed up and

down the country. In some cases, patients are cared for at home under the "hospital at home" scheme. When these patients are discharged the work that was previously done in the hospital is added to the tasks of the GP.

At the same time, the GP is having to get involved in purchasing the care for his patients. If one adds to this the increased requirements for health screening, the flood of paper now required by the Government about all our activities, the great increase in litigation against GPs and the increased demand for services at weekends and at night, it is clear that the job of a GP has both changed and expanded hugely.

Young doctors see this great increase in work required of GPs, with no increase in income and a lowering of public esteem in the profession, and they decide not to enter family medicine. It is this lack of family doctors in training which is perhaps the most important factor in the understaffing of our accident departments.

Yours faithfully,
E. E. J. MARTIN
Bedford
11 January

From Mr Hugh J. Thomson

Sir: The crisis of beds and staffing in the NHS in recent days has been precipitated by a dramatic increase in the number of emergency admissions, and the reason for this is not clear. What is clear is that many of the difficulties in responding to this crisis result from the changes in the health service over the past few years.

The NHS is being turned into a National Health Business. To run a business successfully there must be no slack in the system: every employee and every piece of equipment need to be working to the limit. This is not so when it comes to people's health. There are epidemics and accidents, emergencies and uncertainties. There has to be spare capacity to cope with the unpredictability of dealing with human beings and their distress.

If the Government will not learn this lesson, the present crisis will be repeated again and again.

Yours,
HUGH J. THOMSON
Consultant Surgeon
Birmingham
11 January

Heaven is a place on earth

From Mr Norman Myers

Sir: In your leading article "The church's empty hell" (11 January), you refer to the erroneous impression of Hell as "a place of endless torment". If Heaven is a place of ultimate being for and with others, could Hell be, as T. S. Eliot said, the place of only self - hence of ultimate torment through total emptiness?

In similar style, could it be that the next world, whether up or down, will not be so very different from this one? If, as is sometimes suggested, Heaven is peace and cream, there will be scant scope for such basic attributes as compassion, empathy and related forms of fellow feeling. Equally to the point, if one cannot make oneself happy in the here and now, what true hope for the next time around? And if one becomes adept at making oneself miserable through self-occupation here, might that also prove fine training for the next world?

After all, if we pray "Thy kingdom come on Earth" and recall that "The kingdom of Heaven is within you", then could there be similar potential for the kingdom of Hell? To

this extent, it should not really matter to us here whether there is another life ahead: a life lived to the full, and in the one way that some believe makes that feasible, is surely its own reward.

Yours,
NORMAN MYERS
Honorary Visiting Fellow
Green College
Oxford
12 January

From Dr Richard Ladle

Sir: Contrary to the views of the Church of England's doctrine commission ("Church elders pour cold water on hell-fire and damnation", 11 January) many people, as yet unaffected by Christianity, look forward to the "annihilation" of demons with pliers, - no Boschian monsters by whom to be eaten and then excreted, none of the fates which one had mentally stored up for the offensive and the morally

No threat of damnation will therefore prevent the coming together of Britain's most notorious punk band - even if God has already taken care of the complex bassist, Sid Vicious. The other bands of the era are long gone, the young men to become journalists and wheelwrights, the girls to take up veterinary nursing, or (as in the case of Poly Styrene, of "Oh Bondage, Up Yours" fame) to devote themselves to Krishna consciousness.

Only John Lydon *et al* have apparently betrayed their art to become "accomplished musicians". Next year they go on tour with all their old hits. What will their act be like? As I am almost exactly a contemporary of theirs, I am painfully aware of my increasing limitations. Pogo-ing is technically feasible, but can only be done in five-second bursts with 10-minute rest periods, to allow the cartilage to pop back. Gobbling, too, is not what it was: age dries up the juices a bit, and it would take an awful lot of hawking to summon up anything worthwhile. Take it from me, boys, at 40, anarchic sexuality has to be carefully organised in case of Try And Find The Bollocks.

But what is truly awful about the Sex Pistols' return is that it is a return. Unlike, say, the Rolling Stones or Bowie, who have kept at it and developed, Rotten & co are attempting to be their former selves, unchanged. Going on is OK, it's going back that is so appalling.

Yours sincerely,
FOREST HANSEN
Alvechurch,
Worcestershire
11 January

Post-natal escape: sleep and bed

From Ms Mary North
Sir: Regarding the continuing correspondence about shackling pregnant and post-natal women prisoners: after the births of my three children, I was grateful to be wheeled back to the ward, because tottering was as much as I could manage.

The only escape on my mind was to a clean bed and a good sleep.

Yours sincerely,
MARY NORTH
Wickworth,
Derbyshire
11 January

Cattle at the cost of native species

From Mr J. A. Timmer
Sir: I was concerned by your report "Mad cows? Not out of Africa" (10 January). The production of beef in the fragile and regions of southern Africa where rinderpest, tsetse fly and foot-and-mouth demand the segregation of cattle from wildlife (which have natural immunity to some diseases) has necessitated the construction of vast fences which prevent wildlife having access to their traditional water, grazing and migration routes.

This has resulted in terrible suffering to indigenous grazing animals and has decimated some species. Additionally, the degradation of natural grassland caused by livestock grazing is evident to anybody flying over Botswana. Furthermore, water management in Namibia by open canal forms a lethal barrier to movement of animals.

While British butchers may wish to avoid British beef because of their fear of BSE, perhaps the vegetarianism of butcher Ken Bell's grandchildren is a far better solution to the problem than his demanding Namibian beef.

Yours faithfully,
J. A. TIMMER
London, SE19

How to strip like a dream

From Mr N. Metcalfe
Sir: After failing, for over six months, to remove wallpaper from my house using a steam stripper and chemical wallpaper stripper, I had given up hope.

However, after experimenting, I discover the most effective cure is wallpaper paste! One coat, left for 20 minutes, and the wallpaper is removed like a dream.

Why?
Yours incredulously,
N. METCALFE
Sheffield
11 January

Paternoster Square revisited

From Mr J. C. Bassett
Sir: When the proposed scheme for the redevelopment of Paternoster Square (Section Two, 8 January) first emerged, I warmed to it. I visited the exhibition in the crypt of St Paul's and thought it seemed warm and humane, in contrast to the proposals by Sir Richard Rogers and others which seem rather tired and formulaic. I was under the impression, probably incorrectly, that it would to some extent recreate the original street pattern, and maybe some of the atmosphere that existed before the Blitz.

Since then, I have become aware of the true nature of the scheme. Far from being a genuine and people-orientated development, it is in reality a hulking steel-framed office block, a patronising transatlantic sham designed to get around the mediocre tastes of Prince Charles, and a public which won't be overjoyed at yet another office scheme.

The question is what is to be done instead. It would be nice to establish the pre-Blitz atmosphere, but this is not easy. This sort of thing has to grow of its own accord, and any development must be of quality due to its siting. Maybe the answer is something along the lines of the current proposal, but without the sham and the tweeze, and with a diverse function.

Yours faithfully,
JULIAN BASSETT
London, SW2

From Mr B. W. Tullett
Sir: I have a personal interest in the development of Paternoster Square as I worked as a young teenager on the original development in the Sixties, and as it was my first job in the construction industry, I had never

seen anything so vast being built. At the time, it was obviously described as modern architecture and the shape of the future, but, even as a young lad, I thought it should have complemented St Paul's Cathedral. As St Paul's is one of our major tourist attractions, it would make the surrounding area that much more attractive if the new development and St Paul's could be thought of as one.

Yours sincerely,
B. W. TULLETT
London, E13



Carl Laubir's painting of the proposed redevelopment of Paternoster Square

relevant a basis for architectural design 1,500 years after Rome as they were 1,300 years after. Their past use in the British Isles has shown them to be ideally suited to the urban environments and as adaptable to domestic use as to civic.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER HOUGHTON
Bath

From Ms Grace H. Farmer
Sir: I do not think that the proposed development should be allowed to go ahead. The proposed scheme represents a mish-mash of pastiche architecture and would not enhance the beauty of the Cathedral.

By far the best solution for the site would be to knock down all the buildings and create a park. A nicely landscaped open space would enhance the Cathedral, provide a perfect

setting for one of the country's gems, and give the City of London a much-needed park.

Yours sincerely,
GRACE FARMER
London, N5

From Mr Robin Miller
Sir: Has anyone thought of consulting two pertinent documents?

1. Wren's designs for the setting/immediate surroundings of his masterpiece, which would, surely, include open space around the entire structure as well as, I believe, wide, ceremonial stairs to the Thames, ideal for state occasions.

2. The plan, produced during the Second World War, for the post-war reconstruction of central London.

Yours sincerely,
ROBIN MILLER
London, N1

The blood of human kindness

From Dr Forest Hansen
Sir: Having regularly donated blood in America during much of our adult lives, my wife and I were surprised and offended by Louise Jury's contrast (Section Two, 8 January) of British donors with those in the US. "where donors participate ... for money"

Only a small minority donate blood for money - mostly the unemployed in large cities. Even that number has probably diminished in recent years because of HIV and hepatitis contamination.

The great majority are like British donors, giving "out of the goodness of their hearts" and expecting that the blood will be used in their home areas for those in need. Regular blood drives are held at colleges and universities as well as in business offices, and greater numbers of people typically respond with donations in emergencies.

There, as here, the giving of blood is one of those all too rare acts of pure altruism.

Yours sincerely,
FOREST HANSEN
Alvechurch,
Worcestershire
11 January

Post-natal escape: sleep and bed

From Ms Mary North
Sir: Regarding the continuing correspondence about shackling pregnant and post-natal women prisoners: after the births of my three children, I was grateful to be wheeled back to the ward, because tottering was as much as I could manage.

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Yours sincerely,
MARY NORTH
Wickworth,
Derbyshire
11 January

DAVID AARONOVITCH

Hell on Earth



The week has come to a bad end. Hard upon the news that the remaining Sex Pistols are making a comeback after 18 years, and just before Mrs Thatcher animated her audience of posthumous Keith Joseph admirers, came the Church's disavowal of punitive Hell. Can it be true, I wondered, that Johnny Rotten and Kenneth Baker are both to escape eternal punishment? No demons with pliers, - no Boschian monsters by whom to be eaten and then excreted, none of the fates which one had mentally stored up for the offensive and the morally

No threat of damnation will therefore prevent the coming together of Britain's most notorious punk band - even if God has already taken care of the complex bassist, Sid Vicious. The other bands of the era are long gone, the young men to become journalists and wheelwrights, the girls to take up veterinary nursing, or (as in the case of Poly Styrene, of "Oh Bondage, Up Yours" fame) to devote themselves to Krishna consciousness.

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Yours sincerely,
FOREST HANSEN
Alvechurch,
Worcestershire
11 January

QUOTE UNQUOTE

There is only one bright spot. Job insecurity is at its worst among Tory MPs and councillors as they watch their government tottering to the grave - Lord Healey, Labour peer

Once you have swum through the filth spewed out by the Conservative Central Office, you find you're in clean water and you can swim freely and say what you think - Emma Nicholson, encouraging others to defect from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats

The best thing everyone can do today is roll right over and go back to sleep - Radio announces in New York City, where residents awake to snow banks up to six feet deep

It's so cold you can see the lies coming from a politician's mouth - David Letterman, US chat show host, on the Washington blizzard

Come back into place! I have a hip that hops out sometimes - Baroness Robson of Eddington, Liberal Democrat, rising to speak in a Lords debate on alternative medicine

As far as I can tell by their views on European federalism, such people's creed would be better described as 'No Nation Conservatism' - Lady Thatcher on 'One Nation' Tories

As any taxi driver will tell you, whether you liked her or not, at least you knew where you were with Margaret Thatcher - Tony Blair

Dazzled by the music and the exotic perfume, Dickie doesn't notice the 'I love Egypt' baseball caps

By Lucy Naylor

How to get there

Lucy Naylor paid £475 (including taxes) for an 8-day cruise with Voyages Jules Verne (0171-723 5066). Numerous companies offer flights and holidays to the Nile with or without cruises. For example, Connections (0171-493 4123) has a one-week holiday departing Gatwick on 19 January, costing £359 including cruise from Luxor to Aswan and back.

How to get in

British visitors to Egypt require a visa, obtainable from the Egyptian Consulate-General; call a premium-rate number, 0891 887777, for details.

Where to seek advice

The Egyptian State Tourist Office is based at 168 Piccadilly, London W1 (0171-493 5282). Foreign Office travel advice for Egypt is available on 0374 500900.

It is midday on day two of my cruise from Aswan to Luxor and back, and I am enjoying being the only person on board who hasn't experienced a World War. The lunch bell sounds – or rather, a waiter tinkles the xylophone. It stirs most people to peel themselves off the deck and head downstairs to the dining room. The unfortunates who can't stomach the idea of food stay sitting in the shade with Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*. Those not reading discuss whether it was the airplane meal what dunnit.

The rest of the 140 people gathered on board the *MS Ra* are playing dividing themselves up into tables – the thrice-daily game of who-to-sit-with. On my table Elizabeth, an Imperial 75-year-old, and Rosemary, her pink and portly 50-year-old daughter, start to fall out quite sourly over the history of the Temple of Edfu we visited by horse and cart earlier that day. But the rest of us find we can chat amicably over their heads.

Then, full to the brim of our panamas, we trot back up to the deck to sit in the pool or bubble gently in the jacuzzi. All the while the scenery floats by: the river-hugging strips of sugar cane and palm trees, the desert with unreal mountains of orange sand. "It's like a film, isn't it," murmurs a sun-lounger as she watches her Egyptian contemporaries washing clothes in the Nile. All those at the water's edge – which is most of the population of Egypt – wave at the boat and inspire a quotation from *Antony and Cleopatra* from Dickie, the Bournemouth bachelor: "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, Burn'd on the water. The poop was beaten gold: Purple the sails..."

The people display tokens of greeting – a large number of which they hope to offload on Dickie and his shipmates for as many Egyptian pounds as possible. But, dazzled by the musical instruments played by young boys, the exotic perfume and sensuous muslin wafted around, Dickie hears no sales pitches nor sees the "I love Egypt" baseball caps. It must have been a doddle of a living for these merchants when there were 200 boats squeezing on to the Nile. With tourist numbers dwindling, it is harder now. But not that hard. Before long the *MS Ra* is draped in

white muslin and smelling of sandalwood beads.

To avoid the really blistering sun, trips to shore are taken when the passengers are barely awake (breakfast, therefore, has the atmosphere of a midnight feast). This sometimes hinders us from taking it all in, and we stagger round the Valley of the Queens in a trance-like state.

Night-time is when the boat people really wake up. A 50th birthday cake sets the ball rolling on the first night. On the second night a fancy dress party is announced and a rack of garments produced. I abide by the rule "the older the passenger, the fewer the inhibitions". Middle ground is claimed by a sedate foursome who play bridge in the midst of it all, wearing sensible sheets and tea towels. The evening's mirth is provided by Irene, who tries to sip her cocktail through a sequined yashmak.

Night four is set aside for belly dancing. Noticeable by his presence is Dickie the bachelor, who fractured his arm during the previous evening's sound and light show at the Temple of Karnak. A combination of darkness, starting spotlights and 2,000-year-old statues apparently speaking with BBC voices, conspired to make him fall. This has put paid to Dickie's lone excursions to shore, which it is just as well: even one-handed, he is the best belly-dancer the *MS Ra* has ever witnessed. Jo, May and Val accompany him with chorus girl kicks – they are a trio who have cruised the canals of Britain together for a week every year since they finished their School Certificate.

The days and the temples come and go. Never have I come across so much faith in life after death. It's a good dinner-table conversation. Most of the cruisers say they feel fairly sure there is something up there for them, but wouldn't bet the crown jewels on it like the ancient Egyptians seem to have done. The size of their tombs – and their egos...

Queen Hatshepsut's mortuary temple swims before our eyes in the heat. We climb the steps and at the top, among the pillars, look at the desert stretched out before us. Our smiling silence is broken by squawks of laughter from Jo, May and Val: Dickie is belly-dancing in front of a sphinx. The others aren't sure if it's quite the thing.



The cruisers of the 'MS Ra' at the Temple of Karnak

Photograph: Lucy Naylor

Last day but one and Britain is on the horizon, its memory evoked by a visit Kitchener Island by felucca. It's exhilarating to leave the floating hotel and really sail, touching the water as the boat scuds across the river. Heavier passengers obligingly lean forward when the tilting becomes rather more than is strictly good fun.

Clambering on to the island, we find ourselves once again swamped by the merchants. "Here come the barracudas," warns Henry (dubbed the General), and we all practise the eyes-forward manoeuvre. One

glance at a string of beads and you've had it. It's a difficult 100 yards. The weaker ones fall for a few scarabs, but the rest stride bravely through empty handed. Kitchener Island is a botanical garden of shady delights, and a fine place to stroll. Dickie finds a friend in a cheeky monkey that won't let him go away from its cage without a racket. Rosemary and Elizabeth enjoy a Coca-Cola and a bench under a palm tree.

On the last day there is just time for elevenes at the Moorish Old Cataract Hotel in Aswan, where Agatha

Christie wrote her book. We have been told to avoid alcohol during the day, but refusing gin and lemon served by perfectly poised waiters in white linen on the terrace isn't cricket. The General and Rosemary are laughing in a corner, his wife and her mother are in cahoots. Dickie and the school friends are in danger of upsetting the poise of the waiters and being ejected from the terrace. I am talking to silver-bunned Mary. She deftly deflects my questions about the war, orders us another drink and tells me about her next trip across Siberia by train.

DEPARTURES

Chay Blyth's *Grand Tour* sets sail in 1998 on a 30-month voyage aboard a fleet of 67ft sailing yachts. The trip is divided into 15 separate voyages. An eight-week journey in May/June 1999 begins in Tokyo and extends along the line of the Aleutian islands and around the Gulf of Alaska before sailing south to Vancouver. This sector costs £11,820.

The last leg of the journey, in May/June 2000, sails north from Iceland to the Norwegian island of Svalbard (Spitzbergen), returning to Tower Bridge in London. The cost for these final eight weeks is £9,691. The trip is organised by Challenge Business International (01579 348387).

The first charter flights from Gatwick to Damascus begin on Valentine's Day. From 14 February to 22 May, Voyages Jules Verne (0171-616 1000) will run a programme of holidays based on the flights, taking in Syria and Jordan. The price of £595 excludes visa fees and airport taxes. Single supplement is £165.

One year from now, you could be touching down in Britain after a fortnight of wildlife photography in the Falkland Islands. Photo Travellers (01483 425448) is organising the trip, which costs £3,295. Because of the restrictions of the Britten Norman Islander aircraft that will ferry the photographers around, numbers are limited to eight.

A kite strong enough to pull you along the beach is offered by Natural Heights (0181-682 8980), a specialist activity operator based at Burgau on Portugal's Algarve coast. As well as revealing the differences between quadricycles and power kites, the company also offers horse-riding, cycling and juggling. In West Africa, Kitebreaks Gambia (01432 264206) offers an all-in package of £26 per day for accommodation, meals and kite instruction (flights are extra). The venue is Rasta Kunda, a locally owned and operated tourist encampment.

A Mediterranean holiday for under £15 per person is being offered in the new

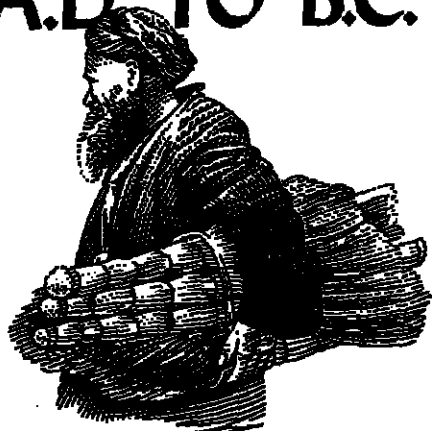
brochure from Eurosites (01706 830888). Two adults and four children travelling to one of the company's sites on the Costa Brava or Costa Dorada pay a total of £85 in late April. This includes ferry travel between Ramsgate and Dunkerque; you have to bring your own car. In peak season, the total rises to £490 – £82 per person. Eurosites also has holidays by the Med in France and Italy.

The big package holiday trend for summer '96 is the all-inclusive holiday – but it is by no means a new idea. Club Mark Warner (0171-393 3131) has had a 20-year start on most of the travel industry in providing holidays where everything from breakfast to boardings is included in the price. At the secluded Mark Warner Clubhotel Cap d'Or, on the Greek Peloponnese across the water from Spetses, a high-season week costs £1,306. This includes flights, meals and activities. Use of VIP lounge at Gatwick on the outward leg is available for the modest extra sum of £20.

The naturist holiday company Peng Travel (01708 471832) celebrates its silver jubilee this summer. The firm is based in Romford, but offers clothes-free holidays around the Mediterranean. In Spain, naturist resorts are located on Ibiza and on the coast of Andalucia – notably the purpose-built Costa Natura, near Gibraltar. The main resort, however, is Cap d'Agde on the Mediterranean coast of France. Six nights, travelling by coach from Britain, costs between £185 and £453, depending on dates and accommodation.

To follow in Rupert Brooke's pen strokes, book a place at one of the Writer's Workshop weeks on the island of Skiros in the Sporades. The Skiros Centre (0171-267 4424 or e-mail skiros@easynet.co.uk) has recruited authors such as DM Thomas, Sue Townsend and Jill Neville to teach creative writing on the island. Prices range from £495 to £755, excluding air fares from Britain, but discounts of up to 15 per cent are offered to people who have taken holidays with Skiros in the past.

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LAST RESORT Mbuzini, South Africa by Thecla Schreuders

Visitors to South Africa's Kruger National Park in the Eastern Transvaal are probably unaware that they are in witchcraft country. The well-tended camps of the game reserve and the abundant timber and fruit plantations in the surrounding lowveld give the impression of an ordered country. But, as with most things in South Africa, traditional practices are integral to this picture. If problems arise – illness, conflict, misfortune – witchcraft is suspected and a witchdoctor is the obvious source of relief.

If you venture south off the national road between Johannesburg and Mozambique and away from the tourist resorts and commercial centres, you're in a wholly different cultural landscape. The Transvaal had been experi-

encing an epidemic of "witch" killings and I was there working on a film about a powerful witchdoctor. His home-stand is at a place called Mbuzini in the furthest corner of the Eastern Transvaal. Mpapane is 72 years old. He has 14 wives and upwards of 60 children, and he's still going strong. His clients travel to this remote spot from all over southern Africa for his renowned skills in divination and herbal medicine.

Our first trip up to Mbuzini seemed interminable; we turned off the national road and for a while travelled through corn and sisal fields. Then we headed into the hills and left tarmac for gravel and the sort of roads for which you should have a sturdy vehicle if you want your internal organs to remain unscrambled. After about an hour, we crested the line of hills in clouds of red dust and saw Mbuzini spread out before us.

It isn't a town so much as a small agricultural settlement. Mpapane is one of the wealthiest men of the district; with so many wives and children, he has plenty of labour for his fields and numerous apprentices for his practice. On the edge of his cornfield is a clearing in which stands an ancient fig tree, hung with the ragged garments of accused witches.

A steady stream of clients turns up at Mpapane's home-

stead for treatment of various physical and metaphysical complaints and will often stay for several days. But there is no cosy inn or motel for them. The closest thing to a public amenity is the "shebeen", or bar lounge, which sells beer and Coca-Cola.

If you want to make a trip up to Mbuzini and need to stay for a few days, the best thing is to make friends with the proprietor of the supermarket, who may help you out. But it's easy enough to make day trips up from any of the luxury hotels bordering the Kruger Park, such as the Malelane Sun Lodge (where crocodile stir-fries are common fare), or even from Nelspruit, the regional capital, which is two hours away. There, you can stay at the Paragon Hotel, an appropriately named Victorian throwback, and sip iced coffees at the poolside. The contrast with Mbuzini couldn't be more marked.

'The Witching Tree', part of BBC2's 'Under the Sun' series, Wednesday, 9.30pm.

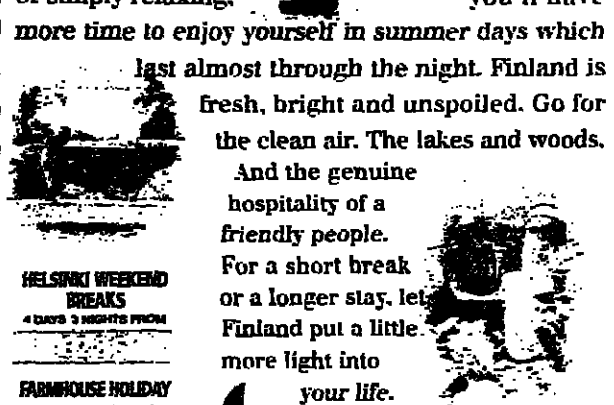


Mpapane the witch doctor and his assistant. Photo: Joanne Head

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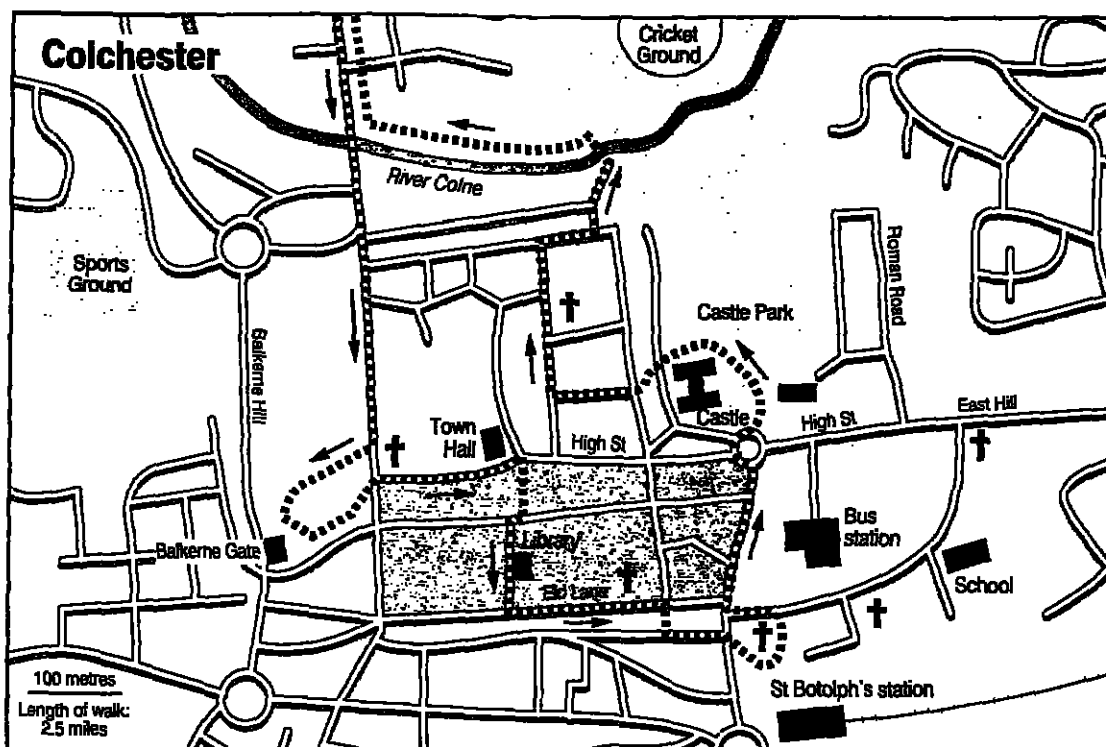
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TRAILS OF THE UNEXPECTED COLCHESTER

The capital of Romantic Essex



A Roman arch outside Colchester castle Photo: Jane Baker



By Andrew John Davies

Chuck away the labels "Essex Man" and "Essex Girl". One of England's largest counties, Essex is stuffed full of timber churches, enchanting villages and picturesque riverside ramblings. Take Colchester, for example, our oldest recorded town. The Romans set up their first capital here in AD43 when Emperor Claudius came marching over from Rome, accompanied by elephants, to accept the surrender of 11 British kings. But if the Roman legacy is apparent throughout the town, so, too, are the 200 elegant Georgian houses. Intrusions of the modern world, namely the vile concrete blocks of Essex University, are mercifully segregated on a distant campus.

The main railway station is some way from the town. Walk up North Hill towards the centre and your eye will be irre-

sistibly drawn towards a massive red-brick structure dominating the skyline. This is Jumbo, the old Victorian water tower named after a famous African elephant and now due for conversion into apartments. The weather vane still displays an elephant.

Near by is the Balkerne Gate, the largest surviving Roman gateway in Britain. Its massive-ness shows how the Romans securely girdled the town with fortifications after Boudicca had razed the previous settlement to the ground in AD61.

Much of the original two-mile stretch of wall, some nine inches thick, is still visible. Near by is the Mercury Theatre and also an arts centre in an old church. Colchester endured an 11-week siege during the Civil War in 1648. The Royalists set up a large cannon here on St Mary's which they called Humpty Dumpty. It was eventually

demolished by the Parliamentary forces, giving us the rhyme: "All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again".

Walk towards the High Street and admire the straight and broad roads, another Roman legacy. Saunter through the ground floor colonnade of what was once the Corn Exchange down towards the splendid Town Hall of 1902. This is Edwardian extravaganza at its best, topped by St Helena, the town's patron saint. Further down the tower are four figures representing Colchester's main industries: fisheries, agriculture, engineering and the military.

Every year the mayor holds an Oyster Feast here at which invited guests sit down to quaff the local speciality. A recent European Union ban on one particular chemical has encouraged the revival of the industry.

The Romans were partial to oysters or Colchester Natives – their shells have even been excavated in Rome.

On the other side of the High Street is the charming Red Lion Hotel with a frontage of about 1500. Go through the nearby alley towards the Social History Museum located in another converted church.

Close by but set back from Trinity Street is a real find, namely Tymperleys Clock Museum in a 15th-century timber-framed house. The fine array of clocks, quite apart from their functional value, are objects of beauty. Make sure you are there on the hour when they chime and ring in a magical orchestral symphony.

Turn down Eld Lane and then along attractive Vineyard Street. At the end on the right are the remnants of the medieval St Botolph's Priory, severely dam-

aged during the Civil War siege, but whose impressive west front has a fine Norman arch.

Turn up Queen Street, past yet more Roman wall, towards the Natural History Museum in yet one more ex-church. I dare you to go inside and plunge your hand deep into the Feely Box and grope the insects. On the other side of the road is the exquisite Hollytrees of 1718, now a museum devoted to domestic bygones.

Close by is Colchester Castle which proudly boasts the largest keep or central tower anywhere in England – much bigger than the White Tower at the Tower of London. The Norman castle was built on what had been the Roman Temple of Claudius. Never ones to waste building materials, the Romans incorporated the bands of Roman red brick.

Castle Park is an excellent

Visitor Information Centre: 1 Queen Street, Colchester, Essex CO1 2PG (01206 282920); open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm
Social History Museum, Trinity Street (01206 282942); open Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, April to October only; closed 1-2pm. Admission free
Tymperleys Clock Museum, Trinity Street (01206 282943); open Tues-Sat 10am-5pm, April to October only; closed 1-2pm. Admission free
Natural History Museum, High Street (01206 282941); open Tues-Sat 10am-5pm; closed 1-2pm. Admission free
Hollytrees Museum, High Street (01206 282940); open Tues-Sat 10am-5pm; closed 12-1pm. Admission free
Colchester Castle (01206 282939); open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm; Sundays (March to November) 2-5pm. Admission £2.80 adults, £1.80 children and concessions

UK DEPARTURES

Dasil Fawley must be fuming. Bournemouth is going all-out for the non-smoking trade. Its new visitor's brochure (available on 01202 451700) details three stretches of tobacco-free beach in the Dorset resort, and features a hotel – the Shelley Villa (01202 302400) – for non-smokers only. A week of half-board costs £159; and if the telephone is too primitive a form of communication, you can e-mail the place at shelleyvilla@bournemouth-net.co.uk.

Further north in Dorset, Hardy souls can take part in a guided walk through Thomas Hardy countryside any Wednesday and Sunday, departing at 10am from the Town Pump in Dorchester. You visit the writer's birthplace at Higher Bockhampton and the home at Max Gate where he lived for 40 years. The eight-mile walk concludes with afternoon tea, which is not included in the cost of £5.

Shropshire County Council has launched a series of walks based at Clunton and Coverdale, which are available from local tourist information centres for a suggested donation to the Shropshire Wildlife Trust of 20p.

Oxford to Cambridge for under £4, or London to Edinburgh for £13.50 – these are the best back-to-college fares of the academic year. They are the standard rates of the lift-share agency FreeWheelers (0191-222 0094). Prospective passengers have to pay £10 to register initially, and drivers £5. For the first time in the UK, a lift-share scheme is being commercially supported (by Avis, Midland Bank, Vauxhall and the YHA), which should enhance its chances of success.

The new cut-price airline linking Scotland and England, EasyJet (01582 445566), has begun services between Aberdeen and Luton. Tickets only from the airline.

Arnie the stallion lumbered forward, the towrope shot a line of spray and we set off down the Rochdale Canal

By Muthena Paul Alkazraj

A final word on safety before we set off, said our guide for the half-hour horse-drawn narrowboat excursion up the Rochdale Canal. "Please don't go out on deck: there isn't one." Arnie, the Ardenne stallion, dutifully lumbered forward, the towrope shot a line of spray from the water as it tightened, and we jolted away from the marina's edge, en route from Hebden Bridge, along the Calder Valley, to Britain's last remaining clog factory.

In 1887 the Rochdale Canal Company operated an express cargo service from Manchester to Sowerby Bridge: more than 30 miles and 92 locks in 36 hours, with the crew snatching six hours rest. But now Arnie was setting the pace. The original boatmen, by reputation a rough-living, hard-drinking bunch, transported coal, timber, wool and cotton along this, one of three trans-Pennine canals, throughout the Industrial Revolution. This afternoon the rudderman, Paul Jackson, and his crew (wearing clogs and Victorian boatman's costume) contained themselves to the occasional drag on a roll-up.

We navigated an imposing lock at Mayroyd Mill, and later scraped under a number of stone bridges that Mr Jackson told me had knocked distracted crew members into the water on a number of occasions. "Prior to Arnie, we had a Shire horse called Corkie," he smiled. "He fell in, too, and just lay there quite happily, eating weed."

Later, a crew member lay back on the top of the boat with his feet on the tunnel roof and "legged" us out alongside the tow-path opposite Walkley Clogs – a multi-storey Victorian mill sitting grandly between the canal and the River Calder.

Clog soles have been produced continuously on this site since 1870, but the complete clog-making process

only began here in the 1970s after Frank Walkley bought out the old business, and began attaching the leather uppers. Though popularly imagined as obligatory work-er's uniform during the Industrial Revolution, demand for the humble wooden sole was at its peak in the late 1940s as practical all-round footwear.

Today Walkley's is Britain's last remaining clog factory, turning out up to 20,000 pairs each year. 40 per cent of their business goes to heavy industrial use, and the remainder to the fashion market, sold through mail-order and their mill shop. Rows of Gibsons, Derbies and Bars (the traditional Lancashire woman's clog) line their shelves in suede and patent leather: knee-high and slip-on; brogue and with bells on. They cover the whole spectrum of colour, and are soled with kiln-dried beech wood. The choice is enough to send a New Model Army fan – regularly arriving by the van load to shop here – into a stupefied freeze of indecision. Bradford's clog-sporting, post-punk, nomadic tribe provide Walkley's with a steady source of custom, and in return Walkley's look after their own. "We send along one of our master cloggers to set up a repair-service at the group's gigs," explained Sue Jones, joint owner of the business, "and we regularly get a tin of biscuits from the band members at Christmas".

In an open workshop beside their factory store, clogs are hand-crafted and repaired by cloggers in public view. One resourceful visitor had brought in their worn out Dr Martens for a clog conversion. The mill building itself, no longer entirely given over to clog production, is now home to numerous other specialist craft and gift shops that are on the whole in keeping with the theme of Victorian industry. It includes sil-



En route to the Walkley clog factory

versmiths, spinners, furniture makers and toy sellers. There is also a Calder Valley history museum and restaurant selling roast beef and Yorkshire pudding – what else.

Hebden Bridge itself, a 10 minute walk back along the canal, having developed into a thriving textile town in the last century, has retained and renovated its architectural heritage. Its mills, walls cleaned of industrial dirt and clad in ivy, now house numerous artists' studios and craftspeople's workshops which have earned it the nickname "St Ives of the North". Much of the top and bottom housing, built to provide homes for its textile workers, can still be seen precipitously stacked along the steep hillsides.

Hebden Bridge's most

famous son, Sir Bernard Ingham, was educated at the local Grammar School. Mrs Thatcher's chief press-secretary, a man not to be crossed by all accounts, apparently wears clogs and gets them from Walkley's. Before leaving, I glanced through their catalogue and discovered it was technically possible to order a blue, suede jackboot. "Now this style rather suits Sir Bernard" I could hear the assistant say.

Hebden Bridge Tourist Information: 01422 843831. Calder Valley Cruising: 01422 845557 (cruises to the clog factory start in April). Walkley Clogs: 01422 842061 – open every day except Christmas and Boxing days, adults £1, children free.

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Once you've sorted out who pays the £369... Who carries the luggage?

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It was good last week to see Steven Norris, VW dealer turned transport minister, endorsing the natural gas powered bus which has just started to ply the streets of Bristol. Perhaps a cleaner bus can also attract a cleaner, more respectable clientele, and persuade Mr Norris—who, famously, doesn't much care for bus passengers—to use it.

Natural gas looks like being the fuel of our post-petrol transport future. It has the potential to be 100 times less polluting than current petrol/diesel vehicles and some car manufacturers – traditionally coy on the subject – are suggesting that gas is probably the way to go.

The environmental advantages of natural gas over unleaded petrol are manifold. It is less toxic when burnt by an internal combustion engine, winning on carbon monoxide emissions (about 20 per cent of petrol's); oxides of nitrogen (70 per cent); hydrocarbons (40 per cent) and sulphur dioxide, the main cause of acid (natural gas produces none, diesel is particularly appalling). Cities, which suffer most from exhaust toxins, are likely to be far better off. The world beyond should also be a better place: natural gas, when burnt, produces less carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main greenhouse-effect gas.

Further advantages are its ubiquity (the earth is richest in natural gas) and that a distribution and extraction industry is already in place. There are world economic advantages, too: Russia is the world's biggest producer, with something like 38 per cent of known natural gas reserves. And nothing would help international political and economic stability like an injection of hard currency Moscow-way.

So why don't the motor and oil industries start changing their industries accordingly? After all, converting a current car to run on



For better or worse: the new gas-powered bus in Bristol

Photograph: Christopher Jones

CNG (compressed natural gas) is easy. Many cars in many countries – 300.000 in Italy, most taxis – have already been converted.

Well, natural gas is not all scents and sensible theory. Its major environmental problem is what's called "methane slip". Methane, which typically makes up about 95 per cent of natural gas, is the most virulent greenhouse-effect gas of all. It's about 30 times worse than CO₂. Although burning it does the earth a favour, all current CNG vehicles let more methane escape through the combustion process than engineers would like. There is also methane loss into the atmosphere during gas extraction and refuelling the car. The upshot

is that despite the potential greenhouse benefit, the result may be a penalty of simply replacing CO₂ with methane, something worse.

CNG is also a less energy-dense fuel, which means you need more to do a given mileage. One of the attractions of petrol is that so little of it gets you so far. Per volume, petrol has about three times more energy than CNG. Plus the CNG tank—which is storing gas under high pressure—needs to be much heavier. A typical CNG fuel tank for a car weighs about 70kg—the equivalent of carrying an extra man's mass.

Probably Britain's most outspoken champion of CNG is Jim

Randle, former chief engineer of Jaguar and now Professor of Automotive Engineering at Birmingham University. Professor Randle believes CNG will start to achieve "real popularity" for private cars in Britain in about 10 years.

The major environmental benefits will come when specially designed engines, better suited to CNG, are available. Professor Randle predicts that with technological advances by the year 2010, the best engine will be a gas turbine, which he believes would be 100 times more ecologically friendly than today's catalytic-equipped petrol car. The turbine would, in effect, act as an on-

board generator powering a bank of batteries supplying electricity to four little electric engines (one in each wheel). It sounds bulky, but the total weight and size of the mechanicals would be no greater than the engine and transmission of today's cars.

Professor Randle and quite a few top car company engineers reckon this could be the state of the art production car in about 20 years.

Beyond that? Hydrogen, say most experts, is the fuel of our long-term transport future (no pollution and it comes from water). Until then, as Bristol is beginning to find out, natural gas should do nicely.

road test

Mercedes Benz E-class

Mercedes-Benz make the best cars in the world. They produce the most thoroughly engineered, solid and safe cars which are among the world's most desirable. It's just such a shame the new ones are so ugly.

Sure, there have been some beauties, such as the latest SL sports car, and most old Mercedes sports models. The recently superseded E-class, Mercedes' most popular model, is a timeless design, looking homogenous from any angle. The latest S-class, although beautifully wrought, and undeniably comfortable, looks like a felled shed with its slab sides and ungainly height.

But worse of all is the new E-class. It is a real *bits-and-pieces* design with three different philosophies thrown together: four little headlamps and fetchingly sculpted front end at odds with the traditional rectangular grille alongside; unappealing flat sides contrasting with the rounded front and a generic Japanese tail, with lamps that look like they are off last year's Toyota.

Fortunately, it drives well: strong and solid, unflinchingly stable even in cross winds and heavy rain. There is noticeable improvement in steering feel (the old E's helm always felt a little dead), in the smoothness of the automatic transmission's shift, and in handling. The basic E200 version is surprisingly sprightly, thanks to engine improvements. There's also substantially more rear room.

On the downside, the new car doesn't feel quite as well made. Its switchgear, for instance, is not as chunky, being mostly the same sort of hollow plastic that you get with Ford's Mustang.

Some of the olde-worlde touches about the old E are also missing – such as the hinged arm rest for the front seats. Now you rest your elbows on the padded centre console, as with every other

car. These changes are all to do with saving money. Old Benzes were built to an engineering optimum, and priced accordingly. Mercedes knows that is not the way of the Japanese and Americans, or now of its European rivals. No doubt, in terms of crash-testing, pollution controls, reliability, panel fit and so on, the new E beats the old one. However, you don't get that feeling of being in something truly special, a marked car above the rest, as you did with the old E. Instead, the mid-size Mercedes is now merely a very good car, probably the best in its class. It is impressive on the one hand, but disappointing on the other.

Specifications

Mercedes-Benz E200 Elegance
auto £27,402. 1998cc, four
cylinder engine 136bhp, top
speed 128mph, 0-60mph 12
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Rivals

Audi A6 2.6E Quattro \$22,690
Much cheaper, model for model, than the Mercedes and just as good to drive. Well-made too, if not quite as substantial.

BMW 520i SE \$23,200 New model coming in the spring, but the old one handles and rides well, and is the best made car in the class, after the Mercedes. Cramped rear, though.
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Don't panic: the owner-occupiers are coming

January has become an active month for sales. And this year there's a new breed of young buyer on the move. By Anne Spackman

Andrew Mancals (pictured with his girlfriend Bridget Scott), the director of Winkworth's office in the West End of London, will save £300 per month when he buys a similar flat to the one he is renting. Photograph: Philip Meech



It may be because of central heating, it may be because Christmas is the only time when busy families can sit down and take decisions, but whatever the reason, January is no longer the ugly sister of the property year. For the fourth year in succession, estate agents have opened their doors to a steady stream of enquiries from potential buyers and sellers. But this year there are two significant changes. First, the January activity follows on from an already improved November and December—for some agents their busiest months of 1995. Second, the seasonal batch of sales by divorcees is being added to by a number of first-time buyers.

It seems that with rents going up and interest rates going down, the property pendulum is finally swinging towards owner occupation for the generation in their twenties. Winkworth, the London chain with 32 branches across the capital, is reporting interest from first-time buyers in one-bedroom and even studio flats, which for the past five years have been almost unsellable.

Andrew Mancals, the 28-year-old director of Winkworth's West End office, is himself buying for the first time this month. He and his girlfriend are purchasing a flat the same size and in the same square in Baron's Court where they are currently renting. Taking his mortgage and all monthly payments into account he will be at least £300 a month better off. "Interest rates are coming

down and the cost of renting is going up by between five and seven per cent a year," he said. "I think prices are steady and there are now so many good mortgage deals around that it is a good time to buy." His office has just had its busiest ever November and December.

Winkworth's Kennington branch has also had its busiest December for years. Andrew Cooper, who works there, has himself decided to join the ranks of first-timers. "There is a new generation of buyers coming through, like me," he said. "With interest rates so reasonable the time seems right to look around."

Two women featured on these pages last year as committed to renting have also decided to join the ranks of New Year first-time buyers. In a complete reversal of the traditional situation,

they found they could live far better as owner-occupiers than as tenants. They can no longer afford to rent.

The first-timers are emerging more strongly in London than in other cities, where rents have yet to rise as a result of increased demand. But signs of life are apparent in the property market everywhere.

The latest quarterly report from the Land Registry, based on the vast majority of house sales in England and Wales, confirms building society reports that house prices began to rise during the summer of 1995. The Land Registry figures include transactions without mortgages, which are now thought to account for almost one in five sales.

The only category of property to fall in value between July and September of

last year was new flats, where average prices fell 0.5 per cent. For terraces, semi-detached and detached homes, prices rose by between two and four per cent. A regional breakdown of the figures proves the case that the quality market is performing best. Detached and semi-detached houses in Greater London have seen the greatest price increases. Prices for semi-detached and terraced houses in most other regions rose fractionally, while flat prices fell slightly in the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, the West and East Midlands, the South West and the South East.

This year looks set to continue the trend for good houses to outperform the mass market, with the agents who sell the more expensive houses taking the

most calls. Patrick Ramsay of Knight Frank (as the 100-year-old institution of Knight Frank & Rutley is now known) believes the property market has shifted a few months forward. He said: "From the first of January until the end of May has been the best selling season for the past three or four years. Once people have got their children back to school they roll up their sleeves and get on with it. But there is still the benefit of the seasons from the point of view of the garden looking its best," he added. "There will always be an element of houses which are best launched between April and May."

Edward Waterson, who runs Carter Jonas's York office, has seen an encouraging number of new purchasers since the New Year. "We did an analysis of why people were buying, and relocation was the number one reason," he said. "People moving jobs often like to spend Christmas in their old home. It's a big change from my father's day, when estate agents virtually shut up shop between Christmas and Easter."

His colleague in Cambridge, Richard Hatch, is recommending that would-be sellers of quality country houses put their properties up for sale now, rather than wait for the spring. "They don't need to look their best in order to sell well because there is such a shortage of supply," he said, "but it is a bonus to have pictures of how it looks in the summer."

Why sell now? Three owners give their views

Dickard and Margaret Garvin are putting their four-bedroom house overlooking the sea in Thurleston, Devon, on the market with Marchand Petit in Kingsbridge this month. They want a plot inland where they can build their own home. Mr Garvin said: "I don't think the timing of a sale makes much difference any more. If people are serious about moving they will do it when they have the money and the inclination, rather than wait until the daffodils come out. It seems to me there are two housing markets. At the low end, people are in a lot of trouble. I hope we are in the one that is moving."

Clifford Isaacs is selling a three-bedroom house with land in Surrey and buying in London. Mrs Isaacs said: "I think the time of year is irrelevant. I'm a banker and I'm keen to beat any bonus rush that might come in the spring. The biggest problem is that there aren't many houses to view. If the right thing comes up you have to move fast. It seems to me that property in central London is selling quickly and near the asking price."

Elizabeth White is selling her house overlooking the Waveney on the Norfolk border through Bidwells' Norwich office. She is planning to move nearer to one of her children, following the death of her husband. Mrs White said: "I'm fortunate to have a house in a lovely setting. We have access to the Broads and I take the view that keen boat people would want to get settled in before summer. The agents seemed to feel that if a house is going to sell, it will sell at any time of year. The only time when I would not put a house on the market is in August. Otherwise it's a question of when you need to move."

Househunter

Hartest, Suffolk



Hartest Mill is a house for grown-ups. Converted from a flour-grinding mill by an antiques dealer, it is a spacious, predominantly open-plan home with quality fittings which would be unlikely to suit a family with young children. The property sits in gardens with stepped ornamental pools at the end of a private drive in this smart village about eight miles south of Bury St Edmunds. It has a sitting-room, library area, dining-room, kitchen/breakfast room, galleried study, two and a half bedrooms and two bathrooms. Bedford Country Property Agents (01284 769999) is asking for offers in the region of £195,000.

For what it's worth

Employees of the newly emerged Scottish Courage group relocating to Edinburgh from the south-east of England are using the Internet to search for new homes. Information rooms have been set up in Staines and Reading by The Property Wave, which publishes property information on the Internet. People can access property details with colour photographs as well as information on specific neighbourhoods, schools and arts events. Gordon Kerr of Morton Fraser Relocation said the initial response to the service was terrific and he expected it to become a standard part of the relocation process. Property details, however, had not turned out to be as crucial as statistics on the weather—the subject that most worried employees moving north.

Who's moving

The home of Brigadier Anthony Wingfield, the distinguished Second World War soldier and former racing manager to the Queen, is to be sold at auction, following his death last month. Brigadier Wingfield, who was awarded the MC and a DSO, retired to Ireland for a life of horses and farming. His home, Brownstown Park, is in prime hunting country 26 miles from Dublin. The Georgian house with five main bedrooms, 26 acres and 10 horse boxes is being auctioned by Hamilton Osborne King on 27 February with a guide price of £1,380,000 (£357,000).

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The fund managers who just keep on tracking

They're cheap, simple to understand and are all the rage. But are tracker funds the best way to manage a portfolio? By Alison Eadie

Index tracker funds are all the rage. Low charges and performance as good as, if not better than, many actively managed funds are proving highly seductive to investors.

The concept, pioneered in the UK by HSBC Asset Management, sounds deceptively simple. Instead of trying to outperform a stock market index, a tracker fund is designed to match it through buying most or all of the constituent companies in their correct weightings.

But just as there are many methods of active fund management, quantitative analysts who set up and monitor tracker funds have different systems.

James Capel Quantitative Techniques in Edinburgh advises 30 tracker funds, including seven unit trusts, for its parent company HSBC. The seven range from the flagship UK Index Fund, which tracks the FT All-Share index, to the exotic Tiger Index Fund, which tracks an index of Capel's own design representing the markets of Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Adrian Tupper, a senior quantitative analyst at Capel, explains that, far from being passive, tracker fund investment offers a choice of what stocks to hold and how to monitor and rebalance them to ensure they stay in line with the index. The first choice is whether to replicate an index in full or in part. HSBC opts for partial replication in five of its tracker funds as it works out cheaper, administratively simpler and just as effective in performance terms.

"Two things move an

index - weight and performance," Mr Tupper says. To put as much of the weight of the index in the fund as possible, larger stocks are replicated in full and smaller stocks sampled. The UK Index Fund holds 350 stocks, including the largest 200, which account for close to 90 per cent of the value of the All-Share index. The 150 smaller companies are chosen to ensure the fund has the correct sector spread to match the index.

Pharmaceutical companies tend to be big, so buying the top 200 companies would almost arrive at the correct pharmaceutical weighting. However, building companies tend to be small, so the fund would need to top up among smaller building stocks to get the right sector fit. In theory companies should move in line with their sector, so if sector allocation is right the fund should track the index.

"Once you get away from full replication, you are taking a risk," admits Mr Tupper. But he adds that buying all 900 stocks in the All-Share would involve higher dealing and custodial charges, as custodians charge for every single communication on dividends, rights issues, annual shareholder meetings and so forth.

The Tiger Fund holds 165 stocks out of a possible 270, weighted equally between the eight markets covered. It is rebalanced monthly, so if Hong Kong has risen to account for 13 per cent of the index after a month, the additional 0.5 per cent is sold.

The index is a slight oddity, Mr Tupper admits. Most Asia Pacific funds are heavily weighted towards Hong Kong, the region's

largest stock market and have smaller allocations for the smaller markets. The equal country weighting of the Tiger Fund means that smaller markets such as Taiwan and South Korea have greater influence than their market capitalisation would dictate.

With only around 15 stocks to choose from in the Philippines, sector sampling is not possible. Even in the larger Asian markets with 40 or 50 stocks to choose from, sector sampling is mathematically difficult, Mr Tupper points out. Countries take the place of sectors, but the exercise of rebalancing to make sure each market stays at 12.5 per cent of the fund is the same.

Liquidity can pose problems to tracker funds. As the Tiger index is calculated and managed by Capel, it only adds stock that can be bought and sold easily by foreign investors. But Mr Tupper admits that in the Far East liquid stocks can fall out of favour and spend six months barely trading or can be suspended. The solution is to pick the next stock on the list. "This is the beauty of a sampled index," he maintains. A fully replicated tracker fund would be stuck.

Capel's seven-year experience of developing a database of international equities, indices and currencies gives it the confidence to rely on its own indexation software. It believes its partial replication technique is the best, but there are other methods. The two most common are optimisation and stratified sampling.

Capel dismisses optimisation as it is based on assumptions of history repeating itself. "We don't know the future perfor-

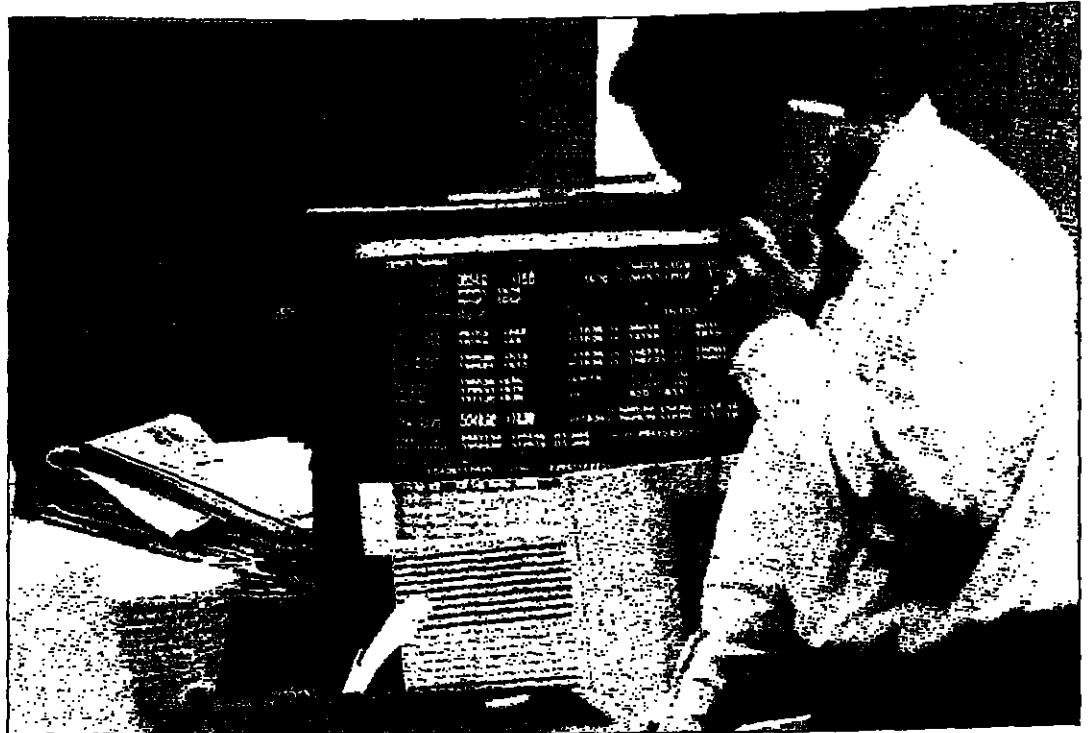
mance of an index, so we won't use past performance," Mr Tupper says. Stratified sampling is also dismissed as "too unscientific", as it does not allow for the smaller companies effect and the choice of stocks is to a large extent arbitrary.

Setting up a tracker fund is only the beginning. There must be careful monitoring of additions and deletions to the index, takeovers, rights, scrip issues and other corporate events that can potentially put tracking off course.

The recent takeover of Norweb by North West Water gave shareholders four choices: all cash; cash and shares; cash, shares and National Grid exchangeable bonds; or cash and National Grid bonds. Capel's job in such cases is to advise fund managers what action to take.

Some indices are harder to track than others. "The more money in the fund the easier the index is to track as you can buy more stocks," Mr Tupper says. UK Index has £167m under management against Tiger's £31.7m. Tiger is also tougher because it follows eight separate markets.

The arguments for tracker as against actively managed funds hinge on cost and performance. Tracker funds have lower dealing and management costs and so can sell to the retail market for less. In the past three years they have also done as well as if not better than almost three-quarters of UK active fund managers that failed to beat the All-Share index. The scope for active fund managers to add value is greater in less mature markets like small company and emerging markets. So the Tiger Fund has more to prove than the UK Index Fund.



On the right track: Tracker funds have lower dealing and management costs than actively managed funds

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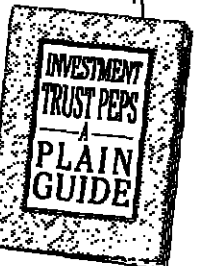


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The early investor catches the best Tessa

As investors ponder where to put large lump sums, some new offers have already sold out. Clifford German finds out what three holders plan to do with the proceeds

Some of the best new fixed-rate Tessas have been withdrawn. TSB sold out its initial offer of 7.64 per cent fixed for five years to investors who re-invested the full £9,000 worth of maturing Tessa within 48 hours, although anyone with a Tessa maturing in the next three months who has reserved the new rate will be accepted. Everyone else is being offered 7.22 per cent. Britannia Building Society sold out its offer of 7.65 per cent and replaced it with a 7.25 per cent rate, while National Counties has cut its rate for reinvesting a full Tessa to 7.2 per cent.

If other top offers, such as Northern Rock, sell out quickly many investors who decided to take advantage of the permitted six-month delay before reinvesting and those whose Tessas do not mature until the summer may have missed the boat as far as the best fixed-rate offers are concerned.

Most attract heavy penalties if investors want to switch to a new

provider. Variable-rate offers are still available, however, with Northern Rock offering 8 per cent to start with and Cheltenham & Gloucester 7.75 per cent. But these rates could go lower still if base rates fall as expected.

Henry Toulouse, a retired auditor from Monmouth, and his wife, Diana, both have Tessas with the Yorkshire Building Society that mature in February and April. Both considered rolling their £9,000 capital into a new Tessa but decided against it on the grounds that interest rates no longer look as attractive as they did five years ago, and at their age they did not necessarily want to tie their money up again for five years to obtain the tax benefits.

After consulting their financial adviser, Gerald Davies of Kymrin Financial Services, they have decided each to invest in a corporate bond PEP with Commercial Union.

They recognise that there is a moderate element of risk if interest rates rise

and not too much chance of capital gains. But it gives them a current yield of 7.54 per cent net of tax. They intend to let the interest roll up but they know they can take interest or capital at any time without forfeiting the tax-free benefits.

They will invest the maximum permitted £6,000 each in the bond PEP and the balance of the maturing Tessa plus the interest will initially go into a three-month notice account with the building society, and into a Schroder Pacific Growth unit trust. Eventually, the money in the building society might well find its way into a PEP.

David Ashman, 45, a local government worker, has decided to use the accumulated interest on his maturing £9,000 Tessa with Britannia Building Society to buy a personal computer for his son, Daniel, nine, who will be able to play games as well as learn new skills on it. While Dad will use it to do the family accounts, David also made up his mind

early on to roll over the capital on his maturing Tessa into a new issue, but it turned out not to be quite as straightforward as he expected.

Britannia wrote to him three weeks before Christmas telling him his options, but he decided to look around at the opposition before deciding where to reinvest. By the time he had come to a decision Britannia's own fixed-rate offer of 7.65 per cent was sold out. He looked at the TSB but its limited issue of 7.64 per cent fixed was also exhausted, so he has decided to leap aboard the bandwagon at Northern Rock and take its fixed-rate offer of 7.64 per cent. He knows he could have waited longer to see if a better offer appears but the prospect of keeping his cash in an ordinary account paying maybe 4 per cent net of tax for up to six months did not appeal to him.

He is well aware that Northern Rock imposes the most swingeing penalties - 180 days' loss of interest plus a fee of £30 if he changes his mind and wants to

move the money within the next five years - but he is confident he will not be tempted. The Tessa is not his only investment asset, so he can afford to be locked in for the duration.

Michele Chalk of Hillingsdon plans to roll over her £9,000 Tessa with Nationwide Building Society as soon as it matures next month. She has been a loyal investor with the society for 30 years and does not even plan to look at competitive offers from rival societies. The maturing interest is also going to be reinvested, in a Bonus 60 account with Nationwide, paying 4 per cent.

No, she did not even consider reinvesting it in anything more adventurous and risky like a PEP. Her husband, John, is an insurance broker, and he has those kinds of things, she says dismissively. They keep their finances separately and she prefers the certainty of a building society and the ease of access to the money. What is he doing with his maturing Tessa money? He isn't saying.

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The test of the Tessa: Henry Toulouse (top) is abandoning Tessas in favour of a Commercial Union corporate bond PEP. David Ashman (above, with his wife Barbara) is rolling his Tessa over into one with Northern Rock.

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Yorkshire BS	0800 378836	6.25 for 3 years	85	£250	1st 5 yrs: indiv determined
Mortgage Trust					
Variable rates	0800 550551	7.49 to 1/1/01	95	—	1st 5 yrs: 6% 3% of sum repaid
Variable rates					
Northern Rock BS	0800 591500	1.19 to 1/3/97	90	—	1st 5 yrs: 6/3 mths interest
Greenwich BS	0181 858 8212	4.99 for 3 years	95	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed
National Counties	01372 742211	5.99 for 5 years	70	—	1st 5 yrs: indiv determined
First time buyers fixed rates					
B of Ireland Mgt	01734 510100	0.99 to 1/1/97	95	£280	1st 5 yrs: 6 mths interest
Market Harborough BS	01858 463244	4.49 to 1/1/98	95	£100	To 1/1/00: 3/1 mths interest
Midland Bank					
0800 494999	7.49 to 30/3/01	95	£250	—	To 30/3/01: 6/3 mths int
First time buyers variable rates					
Scarborough BS	0800 590547	1.09 for 1 year	95	—	1st 5 yrs: rebate rec'd & 6.1 of sum repaid
Greenwich BS					
0181 858 8212	3.99 for 2 years	95	—	—	1st 5 yrs: discount reclaimed
Northern Rock BS					
0800 591500	4.94 to 1/3/99	95	—	—	1st 5 yrs: 5% of sum repaid
PERSONAL LOANS					
Unsecured					
Direct Line	0141 248 9966	14.90%	—	—	With insurance
Midland Bank	0800 180180	15.40	—	—	Without insurance
Abbey National	0345 545556	15.50	—	—	£114.41
Secured (second charge)					
Clydesdale Bank	0800 240024	8.60	Neg	—	£116.54
First Direct	0800 242424	9.70	80%	—	£115.18
Royal Bank of Scotland	Via branch	9.30	70%	—	£103.26
OVERDRAFTS					
Telephone	Account	Authorised	Unauthorised		
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76	9.5	2.18
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 959595	Current	0.76	9.5	2.20
Abbey National	0500 200500	Current	0.79	9.9	2.18
CREDIT CARDS					
Telephone	Card	Min income	Rate	APR	Annual fee
Standard	—	—	—	—	—
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.98%	12.10
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 161616	MasterCard	—	1.14	14.50
Gold cards					
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5417M	11.42
Royal Bank of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Visa	£20,000	1.14	15.90
STORE CARDS					
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods			
John Lewis	Via store	% pm	APR	% pm	APR
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.90A	25.30	2.00A	26.80
Sears	Via store	1.94	25.90	2.20	29.8

Telephone	APR	Fixed monthly payments (£3,000 over 3 years)
With insurance		
Direct Line	14.90%	£114.41
Midland Bank	15.40	£102.59
Abbey National	15.50	£116.54
Without insurance		
Clydesdale Bank	8.60	£115.18
First Direct	9.70	£103.26
Royal Bank of Scotland	9.30	£103.26

Telephone	Account	Authorised	Unauthorised
Woolwich BS	0800 400900	Current	0.76
Alliance & Leicester BS	0500 959595	Current	0.76
Abbey National	0500 200500	Current	0.79

Telephone	Card	Min income	Rate	APR	Annual fee
Standard	—	—	—	—	—
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	0.98%	12.10
Robert Fleming/S&P	0800 829024	MasterCard/Visa	—	1.00	14.60
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 161616	MasterCard	—	1.14	14.50
Gold cards					
Co-operative Bank	0345 212212	Visa	£20,000	0.5417M	11.42
Royal Bank of Scotland	01702 362890	Visa	£20,000	1.05	14.50
NatWest Bank	0800 200400	Visa	£20,000	1.14	15.90

Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods
John Lewis	Via store	% pm
Marks and Spencer	01244 681681	1.90A
Sears	Via store	1.94

APR: Annualised percentage rate.
 A: 50% (C0.6% APR) for 0.5% over £1K.
 E: Available to comprehensive motor insurance policyholders aged over 22 years.
 H: Annual fee waived after first year if £4K+ charged to card during previous year.
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Telephone number	Account	Notice or term	Deposit	Rate %	Interest interval
INSTANT ACCESS					
Portman BS	01202 292444	Instant Access	Instant	£100	4.80
Teachers BS	0800 378669	Bullion Share	Instant	£500	5.70
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	6.20
Skipton BS	01756 700511	High Street	Instant	£30,000	6.50
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Britannia BS	01538 392808	Capital Trust	Postal	£2,000	5.60
Bristol & West BS	0800 303330	Direct Access	Postal	£5,000	5.75
Bristol & West BS	0800 303330	Direct Access	Postal	£10,000	5.80
Manchester BS	0181 839 5545	Money by Mail	Postal	£25,000	6.25
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Nottingham BS	0115 948 1444	Postmark	7 day P	£2,500	5.75
Manchester BS	0161 834 9465	45 Day	45 day	£5,000	6.25
Bradford & Bingley BS	0345 248248	Direct 60	60 day P	£15,000	6.50
Chelsea BS	0800 272505	120 Account	120 day	£1,000	6.50
MONTHLY INTEREST					
Co-operative Bank	0345 252000	Pathfinder	Instant	£5,000	5.62
Manchester BS	0161 834 9465	45 Day	45 day	£5,000	6.08
Leopold Joseph & Sons	0171 583 2323	40 Day Notice	40 day	£10,000	6.52
Bradford & Bingley BS	0345 248248	Direct 60	60 day P	£15,000	6.50
FIXED RATE BONDS					
West Bromwich BS	0930 143668	Guaranteed Growth	31/1/97	£5,000	6.80F
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Investment Certs	2 yr bond	£1,000	6.80F
Bradford & Bingley BS	01274 555332	Fixed Rate Bond	1/4/99	£2,500	6.90F
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Investment Certs	5 yr bond	£1,000	7.25F
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Chelsea BS	0800 717575	Classic Postal	Instant	£2,500	4.50
Newport Benson	01202 502404	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.75
Alliance & Leicester BS	0116 271 7272	Alliance	Instant	£5,000	5.80
Northern Rock BS	0500 505000	Current A/C Gold	Instant	£10,000	5.27
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS					
AIG Life	0181 680 7172	1 year	£5,000	4.90FN	Year
AIG Life	0181 680 7172	2 year	£5,000	5.15FN	Year
Financial Assurance	0181 380 3388	3 year	£5,000	5.20FN	Year
Pinnacle Life	01444 458721	4 year	£1,000	5.40FN	Year
Pinnacle Insurance	0181 207 9007	5 year	£3,000	6.45FN	Year
OFFSHORE					
Newcastle Bank, Gibr	00 350 76168	Nova Access	Instant	£5,000	6.10
Skipton (Guernsey) Ltd	01481 727374	Guernsey 60	60 day	£25,000	6.75
Portman CI Ltd	01481 822747	Gold Plus	90 day	£5,000	6.45
B'ham Midshires, Guern	01481 700680	Fixed Account	31.1.99	£5,000	7.25F
NATIONAL SAVINGS					
Investment Account	1 month	£20	£20	5.25	Year
Income Bond	3 month	£20,000	£20,000	5.75	Year
Capital Bond	Series 1	5 year	£100	7.75 F	Maturity
First Option Bond	12 month	£1,000	£1,000	6.40 F	Year
Pensioner's Guaranteed Income Bond	Series 2	5 year	£500	7.50 F	Month
NS Certificates (tax-free)	42nd issue	5 year	£100	5.85 F	Maturity
8th Index linked	5 year	£100	£100	3.00 + RPI	Maturity
Children's Bond	Issue G	5 year	£25	7.85 F	Maturity

P: post only F: fixed rate
 N: net rate
 All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.

MONEYFACTS 01692 500677 11 January 1996

FEAR OF FINANCE
Clifford German

Most of Britain's old guard, the over-fifties, still believe free medical treatment should be an absolute right, but if the opinion polls are to be believed the under-fifties accept that the state cannot and will not continue to cope and some form of private medical insurance is inevitable. Indeed an incoming Labour government might even make it compulsory along with pension provisions.

If they are right, a whole new sector is poised to open up. The likes of BUPA, PPP and HSA, and a handful of insurers such as Norwich Union and the traditional provident societies have only dabbled in the market. Insurance companies will be able to move in, using their financial muscle to advertise their products and their financial skills to invest premiums to build up an investment income to help hold down premiums.

By establishing a mass market they also hope to offset the claims of a handful of hypochondriacs who account for a fifth of all current claims.

So much for the theory anyway. Legal & General enters the market on Monday, offering a three-part plan with changing benefit packages designed to meet the most likely needs at each stage and hold down costs as individuals progress through life, or at least from age 19 to 75.

Premiums range from 60 to 80 per cent of comparable charges from existing insurers for under-thirties, although by age 60 they are roughly comparable, according to Duncan Hopper, L&G Lifetime's managing director. They start at £10 a month for a single person. By 40 they are around £17 for singles, but they in effect double by age 60 and

double again at the very top age band. Over-sixties are also only eligible for the private medical insurance cover, which at least makes the premiums eligible for tax relief.

The core of the plan is a private medical insurance scheme that pays for hospital in-patient and day care charges and fees, plus out-patient treatment and approved nursing at home. It is not offering any treatment unavailable on the NHS and, like its rivals, it is appealing to worries about waiting lists and fears about the future withdrawal of services.

Hospital treatment is restricted to about 150 of the 227 main private hospitals. Apart from emergencies, prior authorisation is required for treatment but there is no ceiling on claims.

PMI is combined with a modest death and disability policy which pays up to £3,000 for the loss of eyes or limbs in an accident and up to £6,000 if any insured dies.

There is also a cash fund, on which members can draw to pay for items like spectacles and teeth, as well as alternative treatments including osteopathy and homoeopathy.

Individual members can draw up to £200 a year, and families £500 a year, but there is an excess charge of £25 and members are limited to one claim each per year.

The claims limit will automatically be renewed each year and there will be a no-claims bonus to reward those who do not claim. Many current policies exclude cover for pre-existing conditions but if a policyholder has not sought or received medical advice or treatment for two years L&G will consider them eligible for cover.

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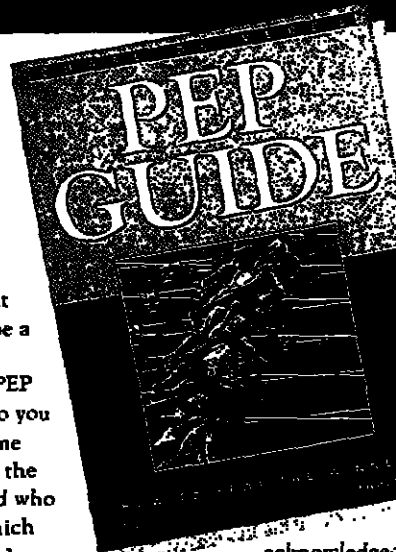
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DANCE

(above) continue at Sadler's Wells with the notorious Macbe of Santiago and a viragoous La Mas Horrida. Sadler's Wells, London. PCT. English National Ballet, first at test from the Stevenson's tawdry Nutcracker, now features Raisa Struchkova's Swan Lake. Royal Festival Hall, London, SE1, today.

Those who favour a tragic ending will prefer to see Sylvia Guillem in the Royal Ballet's Swan Lake on Wednesday. Guillem, first seen in the 1982 series *Evidencia*, gets a chance to dazzle as Odette/Odile. Royal Opera House, London. SE1.

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 O G T H O U S E T
 THE WOLF FROM THE DOOR

10pm Cambridge is the outright winner of our crossword competition, and is now the lucky *English Dictionary* on CD-Rom, worth £580. *Eric*ptic entries drawn from the sack were: Mrs E. A. Devon; Charles Lulham of Colyton, Devon, of Badminton, Bristol. They will each receive the *Self* and the *Oxford Compendium* on CD-Rom. The *Oxford Illustrated Dickens* will be winging Richards of London SW12, whose entry was the classic crossword runners-up.

Eastlow of London SE10; Ruth M Dixon of Petersfield, Hampshire; Elaine Wealeans of Mrs O Hazleton of Glynnethy, West

copies of *A Christmas Carol*.

12.15pm Children's Christmas Gift Service, The New

3.00pm Saug Music

7.00pm, 7.30pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm, 10.45pm, 10.55pm, 11.05pm, 11.15pm, 11.25pm, 11.35pm, 11.45pm, 11.55pm, 12.05pm, 12.15pm, 12.25pm, 12.35pm, 12.45pm, 12.55pm, 1.05pm, 1.15pm, 1.25pm, 1.35pm, 1.45pm, 1.55pm, 2.05pm, 2.15pm, 2.25pm, 2.35pm, 2.45pm, 2.55pm, 3.05pm, 3.15pm, 3.25pm, 3.35pm, 3.45pm, 3.55pm, 4.05pm, 4.15pm, 4.25pm, 4.35pm, 4.45pm, 4.55pm, 5.05pm, 5.15pm, 5.25pm, 5.35pm, 5.45pm, 5.55pm, 6.05pm, 6.15pm, 6.25pm, 6.35pm, 6.45pm, 6.55pm, 7.05pm, 7.15pm, 7.25pm, 7.35pm, 7.45pm, 7.55pm, 8.05pm, 8.15pm, 8.25pm, 8.35pm, 8.45pm, 8.55pm, 9.05pm, 9.15pm, 9.25pm, 9.35pm, 9.45pm, 9.55pm, 10.05pm, 10.15pm, 10.25pm, 10.35pm,

church services

[illegible]

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Television by Gerard Gilbert	<p>Our Friends in the North 9pm BBC2 (above). Ambitious, so-far-so-fine, nine-part drama by Peter Flannery, tracing four friends from Newcastle from 1964 till today (1896080).</p> <p>Cutting Edge Sexual Harassment 9pm C4. It is estimated that one in three women are sexually harassed at work. Cathy Elliott's film follows four of them as they pursue their cases through industrial tribunals (2370).</p> <p>Omnibus 10.40pm BBC1. Special extended-length film charting the history of Gospel music in the United States (6850912).</p>	<p>The Decision 9pm C4. Medical dilemmas brought into focus in a new series. In the first case, a woman in her 19th week of pregnancy discovers she has cervical cancer. Can she afford to wait five weeks for a caesarian? (1898448).</p> <p>The House 9.30pm BBC2 (above). A year in the life of the Royal Opera House. Fly-on-the-dive TV in six parts (82239).</p> <p>The Gulf War 10.45pm BBC1. The series, like the war, draws to an inconclusive end (640852).</p>	<p>Coronation Street 7.30pm ITV. Brian and Denise — she thinks it's all over; he has other ideas (833).</p> <p>Hollywood Men 9pm ITV (above). From the people who brought you <i>Hollywood Women</i> and <i>Hollywood Kids</i> (Carlton in other words), what it's like to be a man in "Tinseltown" — and it's strictly necessary to be surgically "enlarged" (5630).</p> <p>Under the Sun 9.30pm BBC2. Why, in 1994, some 100 people were burned as witches in South Africa (241678).</p>	<p>The Real X-Files 9pm C4. Another chance to see this film from last year's sci-fi week-end — about the CIA's experiments in the paranormal (4031).</p> <p>French and Saunders 9.30pm BBC1. How many people will appreciate Ian and Dawn's homage to Federico Fellini? Either way, Ian and Dawn agree to come in and be ribbed (66925).</p> <p>Inside Story 10pm BBC1 (above). Cameras follow as four lads are groomed to become the next Take That (697079).</p>	<p>Film: Internal Affairs (Mike Figgis 1990 US). 10.45pm BBC1 (above). Richard Gere plays it nasty as the hard-core cop who gets the investigating police officer (1836762).</p> <p>Fantastic Football League 11.15pm BBC2. How will Des "unflappable" Lynam play it with the Lads as he lands guest-manager spot? (2315906).</p> <p>Film: A Brighter Summer Day (Edward Yang 1991 Taiwan). 12.30am BBC2. Yang's masterly portrait of coming of age in early 1960s Taiwan (6169759).</p>
Radio by Robert Hanks	<p>After Hours: The Scott Inquiry 12.05am R5. Every night this week, the late-night current affairs slot looks at the aftermath of the 1992-93 foot-and-mouth and wonders what the inquiry's first report has in store for Government ministers.</p>	<p>Space Fictions 2pm R4. Four programmes on how outer-space has been tackled in fiction, with contributors including Brian Aldiss and Doris Lessing. As one speaker puts it: "The profound tragedy of science-fiction is Sputnik."</p>	<p>Times Past, Times Future 7.45pm R4. Three former Home Secretaries — Merlyn Rees, Roy Jenkins and Kenneth Baker — discuss the powers and limitations of the office, with former Chief Constable John Alderson describing what it's like at the other end of the chain.</p>	<p>First Men in the Moon 10am R4FM. James Bolam unwittingly tries to out-ham Donald Sinden (spluttering vigorously as the eccentric Professor Cavor, inventor of the anti-gravity metal cavortine) in a four-part adaptation of H G Wells's jolly tale of lunar exploration.</p>	<p>Charles Ives Weekend 7.30pm R3. Three days of concerts and features devoted to one of the great-original thinkers and great-entertainers of modern music, beginning with a BBC Symphony Orchestra concert live from the Barbican.</p>

ITV/Regions

[illegible]

Perplexity

Political arithmetic: If J times *Martham* equals *TORIES*, and each distinct letter represents a different digit, and no word may begin with a zero, what is the value of *SMARTIES*?

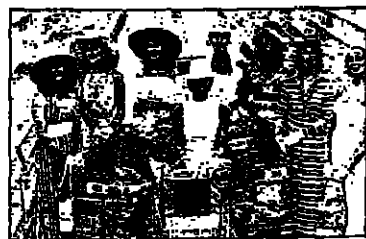
A Larousse Desk Reference Encyclopedia will be awarded to the first correct entry opened on 25 January. Entries to: *Saturday Pastimes*, the *Independent*, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.

Christmas Perplexity answers: Hillary Clinton (only I can thrill), Eric Cantona (scent on air), Tony Blair (brum lay), Michael Althonon (him no threat late), Virginia Bottomley (mob triviality game), Frank Bruno (run for bank), CJ Simpson (joins move), Boris Yeltsin (society sit in), Ratko Mladic (marital debt), Monica Seles (close a mine), Camilla Parker Bowles (real power's blacksmith), Rosemary West (worse marter), Nick Leeson (see no clink), Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (avid no risk lay him) Winnie Marlow.

To start with, West led a low heart and dummy's jack won. Now declarer no longer needed three tricks from the clubs. He drew trumps in two rounds and led a club from the table on which Nafiz followed with the jack! The king won, and after crossing to dummy with the ♠ A, the next club lead found East following with the five!

Suddenly declarer had a losing option: should he finesse the nine or go up with the queen? Time stood still while he brooded but eventually he got it right.

It was a brilliant but unsuccessful try by East, well worthy of the award that it gained.



The big picture

The Stepford Wives
Sat 10.35pm C4

Screenwriter William Goldman was on a roll in the mid-1970s. All the President's Men and Marathon Man were preceded by *The Stepford Wives*, his clever adaptation of Ira Levin's novel. The screenplay is a modern-day parable about suburban conformity. In Bryan Forbes's film, Katherine Ross plays an independent-minded wife who moves to the sleepy New England village of Stepford, where she is deeply disturbed by the submissiveness of the womenfolk. There's something fishy going on at the local Men's Association...

Television preview

RECOMMENDED VIEWING THIS WEEKEND
by Gerard Gilbert



Divine Magic Sat 8pm C4
The Bare Necessities Sat 9pm ITV
Peter York's Eighties Sat 9.30pm BBC2
The Gulf War Sun 9.05pm BBC1
Timewatch Sun 10pm BBC2

Maybe we are, after all – as Peter York claimed last week – in denial of our Eighties selves. To judge by the almost pathologically hostile reaction to his perfectly enjoyable and valid *Peter York's Eighties* (Sat BBC2) you'd think that the "style guru" was personally responsible for that giddy decade. Indeed, critics seem to have had a collective fit of political correctness – seeming not to sense that York is sending up both himself and the decade. Didn't they read the label? This is *Peter York's Eighties* – not Will Hutton's *Eighties*, or, heaven forbid, Derek Hatton's *Eighties*. So, on with the show. "I love yuppies – they're such energetic little creatures," says the mischievous style guru, as this week he considers the property boom.

Of course, there was another side to the 1980s – and the legacy of that other side is the jumping off point for *The Bare Necessities* (Sat ITV), a pilot episode for a comedy-drama about five newly unemployed Yorkshire miners who form a troupe of male strippers. You can sense writer Ken Blakeson straining for *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* (on C4, coincidentally,

at the same time), and, in common with most post-Thatcherite reports from our de-industrialised heartlands, the undertones are dark, but jaunty and defiant. They can't hide a bleak desperation, though, the national tragedy that was the flimsy of the 1980s. Arthur Scargill's *Eighties*, you might say. If some of us still feel guilty about our Eighties selves, then there are no such reservations about *The Gulf War* (Sun BBC1). After all, next to no-one died, did they, in the virtual reality of that conflict? Well, yes, of course they did – but they were mainly conscripted Iraqi soldiers. You really feel for them, caught between the world's best equipped superpower and the world's most lethally self-protective leader. No wonder 200,000 Iraqi soldiers deserted.

In tomorrow's episode, the land war to liberate Kuwait begins, and, instead of finding themselves in another Vietnam – or even Saddam's Mother of All Battles – the American military found themselves at a turkey shoot. The Iraqis became "lucrative targets". An interesting footnote: if Saddam had authorised the use of chemical weapons, the allies would have

breached the dams on the Euphrates and literally drowned Baghdad.

A new series called *Divine Magic* (Sat C4) starts with an eye-opening film about voodoo, which, if you were to believe Hollywood, is all about drinking fresh cockerel blood and raising the undead. In fact, it is a belief system devoutly held by more than 40 million people worldwide. Its bad public image started long before Hollywood was even an orange grove – stemming from the fact that voodoo became the symbol of resistance during the 18th-century slave revolts in that hell-hole that was colonial Haiti.

Timewatch (Sun BBC2) tells us how ancient Egyptian gods used to masturbate, fellate themselves and, each night, sleep with their mothers. If you don't believe me, look at the pictures on the walls of the ruined city of Karnak. High priestesses were called "God's Hand", for obvious reasons, and it was their duty to get the deities in the right mood to raise the sun of a morning and make sure the Nile had its annual flood. It's fun watching a bunch of dry academics explaining all this.



The big match

Wigan vs St Helens
Sat 2.45pm BBC1

Wigan have triumphed in six of the last 10 Royal Trophy Finals. They must once again be favourites in the match against St Helens at the dazzling Alford McAlpine Stadium in Huddersfield this afternoon, the last final before the onset of the summer Super League. Wigan have more firepower than the US Marines; the speedy Martin Offiah (above) likes nothing better than living up to his nicknames of "Charlie" or "Great Balls"; while Gary Connolly has been in sparkling form running in from everywhere.

Saturday Television and Radio

BBC1

- 7.25 News; Weather (4827936).
- 7.30 Children's BBC: SuperTed. 7.35 The Arthur Bunch. 7.50 Inzoukid. 8.05 Willy Fog 2.
- 8.30 The New Adventures of Superman (R) (S) (8280139).
- 9.15 Live and Kicking. Cher is this week's main attraction. Trev and Simon rather less so (S) (68874690).
- 12.12 Weather (6447077).
- 12.15 Grandstand. 12.20 Football Focus. 12.55 Racing from Ascot. 1.00 The Victor Chandler Novices Hurdle. 1.10 News. 1.15 Rugby League: preview of today's Royal Trophy Final. 1.25 Racing from Ascot. 1.35 The Steel Plate and Sections Handicap Chase. 1.45 Skating: World Cup men's downhill action from Kitzbühel, Austria. 2.00 Racing from Ascot. 2.10 The Victor Chandler Handicap Steeple Chase. 2.25 Speed Skating: British Short Track Championship from Guildford. 2.45 Rugby League: Wigan vs St Helens. Live coverage of the Royal Trophy Final from the Alford McAlpine stadium in Huddersfield. See *The Big Picture*, above. 3.45 Football Half-Time. 3.55 Rugby League. 4.40 Final Score (54277868).
- 5.20 News; Weather (3550222).
- 5.30 Local News; Weather (637348).
- 5.35 Dad's Army. An unexploded bomb is discovered in the vault of Captain Mainwaring's bank (R) (638416).
- 6.05 Jim Davidson's Generation Game. Bill Pertwee agrees to be a guest (S) (990665).
- 7.00 Noel's House Party. Patsy Palmer is set up for a Gotcha (S) (553058).
- 7.50 The National Lottery Live. Bonnie Tyler is Anthrax's little helper (S) (164042).
- 8.05 Casualty. An Asian girl is attacked with a broken bottle, as Ash clears the decks for a romantic storyline (S) (159597).
- 8.55 News and Sport; Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (920955).
- 9.15 *Blind* A Passion for Murder (Neil Fearnley 1992 US). Entirely missable thriller whereby Joanna Pacula (Gorky Park) goes on the run when her politician lover is murdered, and is chased towards the Canadian border by both police and the mob. Michael Moore is the taxi driver hired to take her there. You have no such obligation (S) (425868).
- 10.45 Match of the Day. Tottenham Hotspur vs Manchester City and Leeds United vs West Ham United (S) (9552787).
- 11.50 *Blind* Spaceballs (Mel Brooks 1987 US). Tardy spoof of Star Wars in the Brooksonian manner: beautiful Princess Vespa must be rescued from the evil clutches of arch-villain, Lord Dark Helmet – that sort of thing. John Candy, Rick Moranis and Bill Pullman obviously didn't have anything better to do that week (S) (881936).
- 1.20 Weather (728876). To 1.25am.
- REGIONS. Wales: 4.55pm Wales on Saturday. 5.30 Wales on Saturday. Ni: 5.30 Inside Ulster News.

BBC2

- 8.05 Open University: Preparatory Maths: Algebra (4563684). 8.20 Environment: The Heat Is On (8166666). 8.45 The Magic Flute (9715771).
- 9.10 Women in Science and Technology (4407961). 9.35 Me: A Student? (5054665).
- 10.00 Nadan Nadia. Pakistani comedy starring Babra Sharif (6371400).
- 11.50 Film 96 with Barry Norman. Seven, Showgirls and Devil in a Blue Dress re-Bazza'd (R) (5714110).
- 12.20 *Blind* The Philadelphia Story (George Cukor 1940 US). "A paste diamond with more flash and sparkle than a true one", according to Pauline Kael, but it's everyone's favourite paste diamond. Katherine Hepburn sends up her then-icy public persona by playing the impossibly demanding Tracy Lord, brought down to earth and the level of humanity by her former husband Cary Grant and lovelick journalist James Stewart (315752).
- 2.10 *Blind* The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford 1962 US). Over-long, overrated Ford western in which James Stewart's Eastern attorney gets an unearned reputation for heroism when he shoots sadistic cattle-baron henchman Lee Marvin while passing through the Old West. John Wayne and Vera Miles co-star, although Edmond O'Brien steals the picture as a boozey newspaper editor (861961).
- 4.10 Best of Esther. You should see the worst (R) (S) (5530435).
- 4.40 The Oprah Winfrey Show. Grandparents claim their own children don't make suitable parents (R) (S) (70709042).
- 5.20 TOTP2 (S) (7104416).
- 6.05 One Man and His Dog. And that's just the viewing figures. But seriously, we're in Cumbria for the finals. Last in series (S) (354329).
- 6.50 News and Sport; Weather (955416).
- 7.05 The Zambesi with Sandi Toksvic. Recycled travelogue with the hearty comedienne (R) (S) (280690).
- 8.05 The Trial. The ground-breaking series in which cameras were allowed into a Scottish court for the first time. The team revisit the lawyers, the victims and the defendants to see how they've fared since the original programmes were broadcast (R) (712435).
- 9.00 Knowing Me, Knowing You... with Alan Partridge (R) (S) (5329).
- 9.30 Peter York's Eighties. Property. See Preview, above (33690).
- 10.00 *Blind* High Spirits (Neil Jordan 1988 US). Beetlejuice meets Ealing-style whimsy in Jordan's tale of a haunted Irish castle owned by eccentric squire Peter O'Toole, and the American tourists who agree to stay there. Daryl Hannah makes a beautiful ghost (615313).
- 11.35 *Blind* Olivier Olivier (Agnieszka Holland 1991 Fr). A young boy goes missing in mysterious circumstances and, equally mysteriously, reappears six years later. Is he the same lad, or an impostor? (844503). To 1.30am.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV. 6.00 News; Weather. 6.10 Re-Wind. 6.40 Eat Your Words. 7.10 Barney and Friends. 7.45 Saturday Disney. 8.55 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (2864400).
- 9.25 Telegatin (magical) (4388042).
- 10.25 It's Not Just Saturday. Danni Minogue is the host (S) (4015936).
- 11.30 The Chart Show (R) (S) (63961).
- 12.30 Fantastic (S) (44752).
- 1.00 News; Weather (73469435).
- 1.05 Local News; Weather (73468706).
- 1.10 Movies, Games and Videos. Games include Virtua Fighter 2 (32091955).
- 1.40 *Blind* The Thomas Crown Affair (Norman Jewison 1968 US). Modish, shallow but good-natured heist movie, best remembered for the theme song and the split-screen credit sequence. Steve McQueen is likeable as the bored playboy who organises a bank robbery, then seduces the insurance agent (a bizarrely-dressed Faye Dunaway), sent to investigate the crime (93011139).
- 3.45 Airwolf (R) (300145).
- 4.45 News; Sport; Weather (3404481).
- 5.05 Local News; Weather (3126145).
- 5.20 New Baywatch. The swimwear models go to the rescue of some drunk kids involved in a boating accident (9619674).
- 6.15 Gladiators: The Ashes. Don't you wish (S) (835416).
- 7.15 Blind Date. What happened to Kerrie and Tony in the Bahamas? (Including Lottery Results) (S) (751400).
- 8.15 Raise the Roof. This rather unsatisfactory game show finishes by dangling a £100,000 house on the Costa del Sol in front of the contestants. Won't be missed, despite the presence of nice, blameless Bob Holness (S) (151706).
- 8.45 News; National Lottery Update; Weather (794477).
- 9.00 The Bare Necessities. Newly unemployed Yorkshire miners become strippers in this raucously enjoyable pilot episode for a new drama. See Preview, above (7226).
- 10.00 Jack Dee's Saturday Night. Julian Clary, Björk and the Pretenders are the gum on the guests (S) (207400).
- 10.45 Big Fight Live. Henry Wharton defends his European super-middleweight title against Vincenzo Nardello of Italy (872049).
- 11.30 Funny Business (S) (2221375).
- 1.25 *Blind* Mischief (Mel Damski 1985 US). Emetic teen comedy, set – for no good reason – in the 1950s. Imagine a nostalgic version of *Porkies*. Then go to bed (943676).
- 3.05 God's Gift (R) (9670462).
- 4.05 Shift (Followed by Night Shift) (R) (2535269).
- 5.05 Coach (R) (S) (2479266).
- 5.30 News (67895). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.05 Sesame Street (R) (2361597).
- 6.05 Ulysses 31 (R) (3439597).
- 7.05 Super Mario Brothers (R) (40077).
- 8.00 Trans World Sport (47110).
- 9.00 The Morning Line. Horse-racing news (S) (38495).
- 10.00 British American football news (39961).
- 11.00 Gazzetta Football Italia. Italian football news (53697).
- 12.00 The Late Late Show (S) (14023).
- 12.30 *Blind* Ritzbugs (Malcolm St Clair 1943 US). Laurel and Hardy were on the downward curve when they revamped their 1933 movie *Arizona* to Broadway to conclude their 100th film together. They play a two-man jittersbug band trying to help singer Vivian Blane and her mother recover \$10,000 from confidence tricksters (5271042).
- 1.50 Channel 4 Racing from Warwick and Leopardstown. Warwick: 2.00 Edward Courage Cup Handicap Chase; Leopardstown: 2.20 the Ladbrooke Hurdle. Warwick: 2.35 Westminster Motor Insurance Insurance Novices' Chase; Leopardstown: 2.50 the McCain's Handicap. Warwick: 3.05 Tote National Handicap Chase; 3.40 Warwick Gold Card Handicap Hurdle (S) (95981232).
- 4.00 Last Train to Medicine Hat. Off-shown, but softly enjoyable travelogue in which Murray Sayle rides the trans-Canada railroad (R) (8322329).
- 5.05 Brookside Omnibus (S) (2053110).
- 6.30 Right to Reply. The Chinese authorities deny the accusations contained in *Return to the Dying Rooms*, while there's grief about the change of title music on Countdown and the open platform for celebs offered by *The Andrew Neil Show* (S) (771).
- 7.00 A Week in Politics. Frank Field on the stakeholders' democracy proposed by Tony Blair in his recent trip to the Far East (9684).
- 8.00 Divine Magic. A history of myths and legends, mysteries and superstitions, miracles and mysticism begins with voodoo, a belief system shared by some 40 million people worldwide. See Preview, above (S) (1232).
- 9.00 Auf Wiedersehen Pet. Continuing the rerun second series – and the bricks help Barry with his kitchen extension. But where is Hazel, Barry's bride-to-be? (1192262).
- 10.05 Father Ted. Cud sitcom about some houseware Irish priests (R) (233752).
- 10.35 *Blind* The Stepford Wives (Bryan Forbes 1975 US). Suspenseful treatment of Ira Levin's bestseller about suburban housewives taking a turn for the robotic. See *The Big Picture*, above (60247690).
- 12.40 Late Licence: Devil Man. Manga nonsense from Tokyo (S) (4688085).
- 1.45 Twilight Zone (S) (50578).
- 2.15 Big Girl's Blouse (42559).
- 2.45 FVEI (9657511).
- 3.20 Red Hot Chili Peppers. The Red Hot Chili Peppers (R) (9674288). To 4.20am.

ITV/Regions

- ANGLIA
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (44752). 1.05 Anglia News (73468706). 1.30 The Big Day (3217232). 1.35 A World of Wonder (622584). 2.05 Airwolf (3241787). 3.00 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 5.05 Anglia News. Spot and News (326145). 1.30am American Gladiators (297227). 2.25am Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- TYNE TEES/YORKSHIRE
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (44752). 1.05 Regional News (73468706). 1.30am Car: A Day (1782394). 2.05 Film: The Edge (538771). 3.50 Airwolf (3250441). 5.05 Regional News (73468706). 5.30 Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- CENTRAL
As London except: 12.30pm Heartland (44752). 1.05 Central News (73468706). 1.40 Car: A Day (1782394). 2.00 Airwolf (3241787). 3.50 Thunder in Paradise (253088). 5.05 Central News (73468706). 5.30 Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- WY
As London except: 12.30pm California 08 (44752). 1.05 Regional News (73468706). 1.10am News: Edition 1995 (1782394). 2.05 Movies, Games and Videos (44752). 2.35 Car: A Day (1782394). 3.50 Thunder in Paradise (253088). 5.05 Regional News (73468706). 5.30 Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- WEEDMAN
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (44752). 1.05 Meridian News (73468706). 1.10 The Meridian Match (3205195). 1.40 Yesterday's Heroes (7612195). 2.10 The Big Day (1804302). 2.35 Car: A Day (1782394). 3.50 Airwolf (3241787). 5.05 Meridian News (73468706). 5.30 Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- WESTCOUNTRY
As London except: 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (44752). 1.10 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 2.55 Knight Rider (5882597). 3.50 Airwolf (3241787). 5.05 Meridian News (73468706). 5.30 Film: A Fine Mess (945849). 3.55am Film: The Black Rider (5223627). 5.00-5.30am Wanted: Dead or Alive (71172).
- SIC
As C4 except: 11.00 The Passions (53397). 5.05 Book: The Big Picture (60247690). 7.00 New York: Side (557058). 7.15 A Fine Mess (945849). 8.15 The Thin Red Line (3250441). 8.45 The Thin Red Line (3250441). 9.15 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 10.00 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 10.45 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 11.00 Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 11.45am Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 12.40am Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 1.45am Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441). 2.15-3.20am Film: The Thin Red Line (3250441).

Radio

- Radio 1
6.59am Kevin Greening 10.00 Dave Pearce 12.30 Danny Baker 2.30 Jo Whiley 5.00 John Peel 7.30 Lovegrove Dance Party with Danny Rampling 9.00 Radio 1 Rap Show 12.00 Essential Mix 2.00 Annie Nightingale's Chill Out Zone 4.00-7.00am Lynn Parsons
- Radio 2
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt
- Radio 3
6.00-7.00am Record Review. With Jonathan Swain. Martin: Concerto for oboe and small orchestra. Schumann: Piano Quintet in E flat. Tippett: Concerto for double string orchestra. Trad: Italian music from the time of Leonardo da Vinci. Dvorak: The Water Goblin. 9.00 Building a Library. Jermol Nordrup Moore compares available recordings of Schumann's Carnival. Plus David Nice on new releases of 20th-century orchestral music, including Shostakovich's cello concertos from Tru's Mock. 10.15 Record Review. Copland: Symphonic Ode. Rachmaninov: Etudes-tableaux. Op 33: No 2 in G; No 6 in E flat minor; No 9 in C sharp minor. (Laila Ove Andriessen, piano). Shostakovich: The Limpid Stream (Act 2). 11.15 Reissues. Leo Black on the all-time great string quartets, including the Hollywood and Smetana quartets. 12.00 Private Passions. Ken Russell talks about his musical tastes to Michael Berkeley. 1.00 News; Layer by Layer. Archaeology magazine. Andrew Jones looks at how hi-tech techniques are being used to demystify Roman life. 1.25 Youth Orchestra of the World. New Zealand National Youth Orchestra. Gary Brain and Isiah Jackson conduct. (1/8). 3.10 From the Festivals 1995. Carol Smith (soprano).



- Radio 4
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt
- Radio 5
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt
- Radio 6
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt

choice

- R4 starts a new season on mar's relationship with the rest of the cosmos. "Journeys into Space" – today's highlights include Jay Nelson on where space research takes us next, in The Final Frontier (4.30pm R4), and Heather Couper finding out about the party happening, wholly expensive Hubble Space Telescope in Starwatch (5.40pm R4).
- Radio 4
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt
- Radio 5
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt
- Radio 6
6.00am Mo Dutt 8.05 Brian Matthew 10.00 Judi Sills 12.00 Haynes on Saturday 1.30 Change at Delphorte 2.00 Martin Keener on Saturday 4.00 Nick Barroughs 5.00 Tom Paxton in Concert 6.00 Lifestyle 7.00 The Story Behind... The Music Man 7.30 The Music Man 10.00 Sheridan Morley 12.05 Charles Nove 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutt

- 10.15 Stanza on Stage.
10.45 Philip's Figures: Wittenstein. (3/4).
- 11.00 Touch of Genes. (1/4).
- 11.30 The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Douglas Adams's sci-fi adventure.
- 12.00 News.
- 12.30 The Late Story: Broken Nights. By Margaret McAllister.
- 12.48 Shipping Forecast.
- 1.00 As World Service.
- Radio 5
(63.90MHz FM)
6.05am Dirty Tackle 6.30 Brian Hayes at Breakfast 9.05 Weekend with Karshay and Whistler
11.05 Top Gear 11.35 Crime Desk 12.00 Midday Edition
12.15 Sportscafe 1.05 Sport on Five 6.00 Six-O-Six 7.05 Basketball 9.25 Brief Lives 10.05 The Last Night 11.00 Night Extra
12.05 After Hours 2.00 Up All Night 5.00-6.00am Morning Reports
- Classic FM
(100.0MHz FM)
6.00am Sarah Lucas 9.00 Classic Countdown 12.00 Classic Gardening Forum. From East Bergholt Horticultural Society in Suffolk. 1.00 Alan Mann 3.00 The Saturday Alternative 6.00 Classic America 7.00 The World Opera Season. Spontini: La Vestale. Anthony Michaels Moore, J. Patrick Raftery, Karen Hufstodt, Danyce Graves, Chorus and Orchestra of La Scala, Milan/Riccardo Muti. 10.00 Classic Quiz 12.00 Andrew Lee 4.00 Classic Countdown 5.00-6.00am Michael Farstone
- Nitin Radio
(119.1MHz FM 115.9MHz FM)
6.00am Janey Lee Grace 10.00 Richard Skinner 2.00 Mark Forrest (including the Virgin Crunchie Album Chart) 6.00 Mitch Johnson 10.00 Robin Banks 2.00-6.00am Howard Pearce
- World Service
(199kHz AM)
1.00 World News 1.10 Press Review 1.15 The Traditions of the Prophet 1.30 From Our Own Correspondent 1.50 Write On 2.00 Newswatch 2.30 The Ed Stewart Show 3.00 World News 3.15 Sports Roundup 3.30 Fourth Estate 3.45 Science View 3.50 Waveguide 4.00 Newswatch 4.30 Short Story 4.45 The World in Your Ear 5.00 Newswatch 5.30 In Praise of God

Satellite

- SKY ONE
7.00am Undun (597351). 10.00 Ghoul-Lashed (84348). 12.00 WWF Mania (87435). 1.00 The Hit Mix (99555). 2.00 Teach (7435). 2.30 Family Ties (6771). 3.00 One West Week (67394). 4.00 Kung Fu: The Legend Continues (89329). 5.00 The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles (4394). 6.00 WWF Superstars (83619). 7.00 Robocop (17690). 8.00 The Secrets of the X-Files (20110). 9.00 Coppi Kong 9.30 The Serial Killers (62589). 10.00 Saturday Night, Sunday Morning (48058). 10.30 Revelations (57706). 11.00 The Movie Show (80058). 11.30 Forever Knight (80936). 12.00 WHPP in Cincinnati (30646). 1.00 Saturday Night Live (70424). 2.00-7.00am Hit Mix Long Play (712507).
- SKY TWO
6.00am Knock on Any Door (1949) (58313). 8.00 Across the Pacific (1942) (52394). 10.00 Smokey (1966) (79416). 12.00 A Perfect Couple (1979) (48145). 2.00 The Longest (1986) (64313). 4.00 Across the Great Divide (1977) (9226). 6.00 3 Ninjas (1992) (50706). 7.30 My Father, the Hero (1994). Comedy starring Gerard Depardieu and Katherine Ross (40461). 9.00 Murder One (25422). 10.00 Ghost in the Machine (1993) (788396). 11.10 Pleasure in Paradise (1993) (953110). 1.05 The Breakthrough (1993) (2588443). 2.35 Worth Winning (1990) (693462). 4.15-6.00am Across the Great Divide (1977) (240288).
- MOVIE CHANNEL
6.00am Rockin' With Judy Jolson (56955). 8.00am The Movie (1986) (50936). 10.00 The Caddy (1953) (77058). 12.00 Look Who's Talking Now (1993) (46787). 2.00 Where the Red Fern Grows (1974) (32955). 4.00 Majority Rule (1992) (7868). 6.00 The Devil's Bed (1994). Thriller starring Nicolette Sheridan and Joe Lando (25519). 8.00 Look Who's Talking Now (1993). Comedy starring John Travolta and Kirstie Alley (24936). 10.00 The Getaway (1993) (22559). 1.50 Slaughter of the Innocents (1993) (445820). 3.35-6.00am Exposed (1993) (6370366).
- SKY THREE
4.00pm The Young Philadelphians (1959) (8812694). 6.20 The Last American Hero (1978) (67079503). 8.00 Drive Red Fern Grows (1974) (32955). 4.00 (60839042). 1.10-3.30am Rosemary's Baby (1968) (29911795).
- UK GOLD
7.00am Give Us A Cue (8161955). 7.30 Going for Gold (5592400). 7.50 The Pink Panther (4102597). 8.00 Warship (3280336). 9.00 Secret Army (3280336). 10.00 Neighbors Omnibus (707434). 12.00 Neighbors Omnibus (707434). 1.00 Neighbors Omnibus (707434). 1.50 Bliss.

- This House (21054918). 2.15 EastEnders Omnibus (85103619). 5.00 What a Carry On! (9210495). 5.35 Fall and Rise of Reginald Parry (1803509). 6.10 French Fields (6201868). 6.40 R Art! Art! Hot, Mum (5674874). 7.15 The Liver Birds (2051954). 7.50 Band (5920290). 8.25 The 5th Original (12816461). 9.30 Jack the Ripper (3382348). 11.10 Colors (25795023). 1.45-6.00am Shopping at Night (5774820).
- SKY SPORTS
7.00am Racing (21935). 7.30 Live Cricket
- (4634752). 5.00 Opposite Lock (5100333). 7.00 Basketball (1481771). 9.30 Rugby Union Update (2366313). 10.30 Golf USA (2393313). 11.30-12.00am Staff Selling (8331313).
- LIVE TV
9.00am AM 10.00 Fashion Show 11.00 Video Box 1.00pm Week in Review 2.00 Sport 6.00 Best of Buzz 9.00 Showbiz 9.00 Fashion Show 9.30 Video Box 10.00 Stand Up 11.00 The Sex Show 12.00midnight The Sex Show 1.00-4.00am Night Hours

By Order of the Official Receiver J. Reuser Esq.
Bankruptcy Judgement # 0332 Insolvency Court of The Hague.
re. Estate of the late E.F. Tipse

UNRESERVED BANKRUPTCY LIQUIDATION AUCTION

to clear warehouse & finalise commission

The Flipse International Diplomatic & Consular Collections

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Following receipt of Receiver's instructions to urgently liquidate all outstanding merchandise on this commission, goods consolidated in warehouse & apportioned in large mixed sections to be put under the hammer piece-by-piece where held entirely without reserve

IMMEDIATE PUBLIC AUCTION

in two sessions

SATURDAY 13 JANUARY AT 2 PM, VIEWING FROM 1 PM

&

SUNDAY 14 JANUARY AT 11 AM, VIEWING FROM 10 AM

at

WAREHOUSE 20, FARM LANE TRADING ESTATE,
101

Blair and Clarke: are they by chance related?

No politician shifts a society single-handed, by sheer force of personality. The trick is to spot the trend, sense the mood of a society, capture it, mould it, describe it, and then claim the credit for it.

That is what Margaret Thatcher did in the Eighties. In an era that saw the world opening up to global competition, her advocacy of free markets, privatisation and lower taxation were of the moment and defined that moment. As a result, "Thatcherism" gained hegemony in the country and eventually succeeded in converting her political opponents in the process. It spread throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, Europe, Asia and the post-Communist states. This was an extraordinarily successful exercise in divining and appropriating the Zeitgeist.

But what next? The struggle to differentiate Britain's main political parties - creating blue or red water between them - demonstrates the lack of a fresh Big Idea. We are halfway through the Nineties, with no new map to plot our course.

This week Tony Blair and (making a comeback) Margaret Thatcher set about changing all that. They offered themselves as cartographers of the decade. The Labour leader went to Singapore and sent back a message that a "stakeholder society" was the way forward for Britain. Meanwhile, Baroness Thatcher returned to the legacy of her guru, Keith Joseph, and set out her two key ideas for the Nineties: shrinking the state and creating an anti-European Little England.

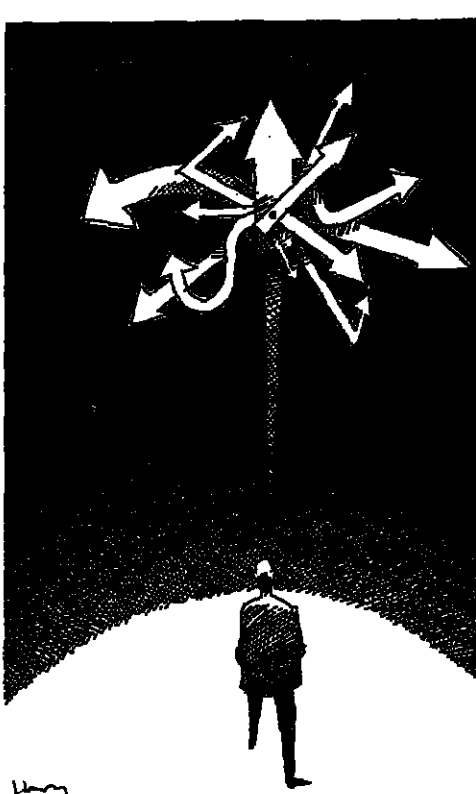
These ideas are desperately vague. It is hard to know what a stakeholder society means: Mr Blair, perhaps deliberately, has done little to

resolve the confusion. It is just as difficult to know how Lady Thatcher would achieve her ends, which have until now been beyond British politicians. In power, she herself committed Britain to its present involvement with Europe and failed to reduce the level of national income spent by the state.

Yet vagueness is not necessarily fatal to new ideas. When Margaret Thatcher took office in 1979, she did not have a grand plan: she had a basic set of principles that chimed with popular opinion and were to underpin the specific policies of the following decade. The vital question is: do any of these ideas, or aspects of them, strike a chord today? In 10 years time, will they, like Eighties Thatcherism, be big enough to label an era?

Mr Blair's stakeholder society, for all its haziness, certainly resonates. Commentators have been intrigued by the word. The notion of everyone having a stake in society makes sense. It seems to describe an inclusive country, in which everyone has roots and a say over what happens. We need these notions at a time when competition and globalisation are tearing apart the glue that holds society together.

Jobs for life and the traditional welfare state are both under threat. They are increasingly seen as expensive luxuries at a time when flexible workforces and low taxation, financing a minimal state, are said to be the key to maintaining competitiveness. As a result, social cohesion - vital for stability and economic productivity - is in danger as crime rises and an underclass of the disadvantaged and disaffected develops. Britain,



along with other countries, needs a way of building a humane society in a global era.

But there is plenty of suspicion that the stakeholder idea is no more than a repackaging of failed Labour policies. It invokes the idea of empowering groups or individuals who have claim to be included in decision-making. But if Mr Blair merely intends to reinvigorate the power of trade unions and other institutions that ran the corporate state of the Seventies, then he has made a big mistake. Indeed, even if this was not intention, Mr Blair may have made a political error in resurrecting Labour's old ghosts.

He has also, by implication, associated himself with a body of literature about stakeholding in companies that says businesses should be run not only in the interests of shareholders, but of customers, employees, consumers and suppliers. This may sound wonderful in theory, but over-regulation could suffocate business and enterprise in much the same way as Labour's last failed exercise in economic micro-management - nationalisation.

In short, stakeholding may have nothing to do with the trends of the time, which are towards deregulation, free markets, individualism and increased competitiveness. But there is one version that might catch on, namely the notion that everyone should have their own individual stake in the welfare state. That could mean compulsory saving for state-overseen pensions schemes, vouchers for education and perhaps even new ways of establishing rights to treatment in the NHS.

If this is what Mr Blair means, then he may

be on to a Big Idea, albeit a controversial one, that could prove politically impossible to implement. It would convert the welfare state into a system that was socially inclusive, but did not necessarily guarantee equality and which paid out more on the basis of lifetime contribution than need. It would represent a marriage of choice with collectivism, of self-reliance with state support, while giving people a greater sense of owning their entitlements. And it would permit a shift away from conventional taxation, to claims by the state being earmarked for specific purposes.

If this is the direction in which Mr Blair is moving, there are good grounds for believing that his ideas will have a wider resonance. Indeed he will find plenty of fellow travellers on the Tory left. Much of what Mr Blair has to say about social inclusion and economic pragmatism echoes the language used by Kenneth Clarke. "The pace of change has created fears and uncertainties among men and women in every walk of life. A strong welfare state has an important role in reducing these fears." So said the Chancellor in his Maastricht 18 months ago.

In short, the chief British political divide may not be between Labour and the Tories, but between the Blair/Clarke philosophy - Blairism - and Margaret Thatcher (and her acolytes), who this week made her bid to be the architect of the next decade, just as she was of the last.

Who will win? We cannot be sure. But the ideas that will triumph and eventually engulf all parties will be those that best ensure our survival in today's global, competitive market.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A&E wards: conditions that take a toll on doctors' morale Heaven is a place on earth

From Dr Julian Evers

Sir: I strongly disagree with your assertion that junior doctors should be "press-ganged" into working in Accident and Emergency departments (leading article, 11 January).

I spent six months in two casualty departments in south-east London and I would rather resign my profession than do it again.

Notwithstanding being twice assaulted by patients I was trying to help, having the door of my treatment room kicked in by a man angered by the fact that my dying patient had jumped the queue ahead of his broken finger, and my writing table taken away by hospital management on the grounds that the doctors were "expanding too much time writing". I was allowed two weekends out of 11 free, and was almost always working anti-social hours.

The stark reality is that not enough doctors wish to work in the NHS anymore, especially in A&E. A significant number of my contemporaries have been so disillusioned that they have left medicine altogether.

Your leader demonstrates a public misconception: that doctors are some sort of breed

apart of medical soldiers, ready to be drafted into any situation. Doctors are actually human beings. They have loved ones, emotions and outside lives. They don't want to work in A&E because the conditions are frequently so inhuman that they take an unacceptable toll on their private and professional lives.

Yours faithfully,
JULIAN EVERS
London, SW2

From Dr E. E. J. Martin

Sir: In your leading article (11 January) you fail to mention one of the major factors leading to a shortage of accident and emergency junior doctors in England - the great shortage of doctors training to be general practitioners.

The Royal College of General Practitioners encourages GPs in training to do six months in A&E. However, the number of doctors training to become GPs has fallen by nearly 25 per cent over the past few years.

Recently, more surgery is carried out on a day-care basis, with a patient being discharged on the same day as their operation. Large psychiatric hospitals are being closed up and

down the country. In some cases, patients are cared for at home under the "hospital at home" scheme. When these patients are discharged the work that was previously done in the hospital is added to the tasks of the GP.

At the same time, the GP is having to get involved in purchasing the care for his patients. If one adds to this the increased requirements for health screening, the flood of paper now required by the Government about all our activities, the great increase in litigation against GPs and the increased demand for services at weekends and at night, it is clear that the job of a GP has both changed and expanded hugely.

Young doctors see this great increase in work required of GPs, with no increase in income and a lowering of public esteem in the profession, and they decide not to enter family medicine. It is this lack of family doctors in training which is perhaps the most important factor in the understaffing of our accident departments.

Yours faithfully,
E. E. J. MARTIN
Bedford
11 January

From Mr Hugh J. Thomson

Sir: The crisis of beds and staffing in the NHS in recent days has been precipitated by a dramatic increase in the number of emergency admissions, and the reason for this is not clear. What is clear is that many of the difficulties in responding to this crisis result from the changes in the health service over the past few years.

The NHS is being turned into a National Health Business. To run a business successfully there must be no slack in the system: every employee and every piece of equipment need to be working to the limit. This is not so when it comes to people's health. There are epidemics and accidents, emergencies and uncertainties. There has to be a spare capacity to cope with the unpredictability of dealing with human beings and their distress.

If the Government will not learn this lesson, the present crisis will be repeated again and again.

Yours faithfully,
HUGH J. THOMSON
Consultant Surgeon
Birmingham
11 January

From Mr Norman Myers

Sir: In your leading article "The church's empty hell" (11 January), you refer to the erroneous impression of Hell as "a place of endless torment". If Heaven is a place of ultimate being for and with others, could Hell be, as T. S. Eliot said, the place of only self - hence of ultimate torment through total emptiness?

In similar style, could it be that the next world, whether up or down, will not be so very different from this one? If, as is sometimes suggested, Heaven is peace and cream, there will be scant scope for such basic attributes as compassion, empathy and related forms of fellow feeling. Equally to the point, if one cannot make oneself happy in the here and now, what true hope for the next time around? And if one becomes adept at making oneself miserable through self-preoccupation here, might that also prove fine training for the next world?

After all, if we pray "Thy kingdom come on Earth" and recall that "The kingdom of Heaven is within you", then could there be similar potential for the kingdom of Hell? To

this extent, it should not really matter to us here whether there is another life ahead: a life lived to the full, and in the one way that some believe makes that feasible, is surely its own reward.

Yours faithfully,
NORMAN MYERS
Honorary Visiting Fellow
Green College
Oxford
12 January

From Dr Richard Ladle

Sir: Contrary to the views of the Church of England's doctrine commission ("Church elders pour cold water on hell-fire and damnation", 11 January) many people, as yet unaffected by Christianity, look forward to the "annihilation" at the end of a busy life and would consider eternal existence (disincorporated or not) as purgatorial.

The commissioners' opinions seem nothing more than whistling in the dark while the monster of modern science breathes heavily in the corner of the room.

Yours (un)faithfully,
RICHARD J. LADLE
London, NI
11 January

DAVID AARONOVITCH Hell on Earth



The week has come to a bad end. Hard upon the news that the remaining Sex Pistols are making a comeback after 18 years, and just before Mrs Thatcher animated her audience of posthumous Keith Joseph admirers, came the Church's disavowal of punitive Hell. Can it be true, I wondered, that Johnny Rotten and Kenneth Baker are both to escape eternal punishment? No demons with pliers, no Boschian monsters by whom to be eaten and then excreted, none of the fates which one had mentally stored up for the offensive and the morally deficient?

No threat of damnation will therefore prevent the coming together of Britain's most notorious punk band - even if God has already taken care of the complex bassist, Sid Vicious. The other bands of the era are long gone, the young men to become journalists and wheelwrights, the girls to take up veterinary nursing, or (as in the case of Poly Styrene, of "Oh Bondage, Up Yours" fame) to devote themselves to Krishna consciousness. Only John Lydon et al have apparently betrayed their art to become "accomplished musicians". Next year they go on tour with all their old hits.

What will their act be like? As I am almost exactly a contemporary of theirs, I am painfully aware of my increasing limitations. Pogo-ing is technically feasible, but can only be done in five-second bursts with 10-minute rest periods, to allow the cartilage to pop back. Gobbing, too, is not what it was: age dries up the juices a bit, and it would take an awful lot of hawking to summon up anything worthwhile. Take it from me, boys, at 40, anarchic sexuality has to be carefully organised - a case of Try And Find The Bollocks.

But what is truly awful about the Sex Pistols' return is that it is a return. Unlike, say, the Rolling Stones or Bowie, who have kept at it and developed, Rotten & co are attempting to be their former selves, unchanged. Going on is OK, it's going back that is so appalling.

Consider this nightmare. The whole country indulges in a 1977 reversion, forced to resume the roles and lives we all led then. Except that we cannot become younger, or shed the experiences of the intervening years. So the elderly Jim Callaghan presides over a tottering cabinet, including Denis Healey, Michael Foot and Shirley Williams. An embittered David Owen is Foreign Secretary.

Margaret leads the Tories, not in her native, almost grish 1977 incarnation, but as she is now, with receding gums, thyroidal eye-bulge and an enormous chip on her shoulder. In Washington, a decrepit Jimmy Carter is just beginning his stint in the White House.

As if this weren't bad enough, the whole country is invited to hold street parties in a ghastly post-Diana parody of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. British Leyland makes coy, pontificating Geoff Boycott leads England out against the Aussies, huffy 40-plus footballers with Scouser moustaches pantingly contest the Cup Final, and Virginia Wade creaks her way to victory over Chrissie Evert at Wimbledon.

A wrinkled, balding Woody Allen directs Diane Keaton in a comedy of sexual manners set in New York and featuring relationships with very young women - so no change there. Larry Holmes fights George Forman for the heavyweight championship of the world. Sorry, that's a bit far-fetched.

I am transported back to a grimy room in a student house in Ladbroke Grove, living off Birds Eye individual shepherd's pies and arguing about toilet-cleaning rota. From time to time I am visited by various girlfriends whom I used and abused in those days. Except that now they have children and therapists, complain about the cleanliness of the sheets, talk about what they want out of sex and fail to fade away on demand.

No, Johnny. No, Maggie. There can be no going back. To revisit the past, knowing what we now know, that, surely - whatever the bishops say - would be Hell.

QUOTE UNQUOTE

There is only one bright spot. Job insecurity is at its worst among Tory MPs and councillors as they watch their government tottering to the grave - Lord Bessley, *Labour peer*

Once you have swum through the filth spewed out by the Conservative Central Office, you find you're in clean water and you can swim freely and say what you think - Emma Nicholson, *encouraging others to defect from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats*

The best thing everyone can do today is roll right over and go back to sleep - Radio announcer in New York City, where residents awake to snow banks up to six feet deep

It's so cold you can see the lies coming from a politician's mouth - David Letterman, *US chat show host, on the Washington blizzard*

Come back into place! I have a hip that hops out sometimes - Baroness Robson of Kildington, *Liberal Democrat, rising to speak in a Lords debate on alternative medicine*

As far as I can tell by their views on European federalism, such people's creed would be better described as 'No Nation Conservatism' - Lady Thatcher on 'One Nation' Tories

As any taxi driver will tell you, whether you liked her or not, at least you knew where you were with Margaret Thatcher - Tony Blair

Cattle at the cost of native species

From Mr J. A. Timmer

Sir: I was concerned by your report "Mad cows? Not out of Africa?" (10 January). The production of beef in the fragile arid regions of southern Africa where rinderpest, tsetse fly and foot-and-mouth demand the segregation of cattle from wildlife (which have natural immunity to some diseases) has necessitated the construction of vast fences which prevent wildlife having access to their traditional water, grazing and migration routes.

This has resulted in terrible suffering to indigenous grazing animals and has decimated some species. Additionally, the degradation of natural grassland caused by livestock grazing is evident to anybody flying over Botswana. Furthermore, water management in Namibia by open canal forms a lethal barrier to movement of animals.

While British butchers may wish to avoid British BSE, perhaps the vegetarianism of butcher Ken Bell's grandchildren is a far better solution to the problem than his demanding Namibian beef.

Yours faithfully,
J. A. TIMMER
London, SE19

How to strip like a dream

From Mr N. Metcalfe

Sir: After failing, for over six months, to remove wallpaper from my house using a steam stripper and chemical wallpaper stripper, I had given up hope.

However, after experimenting, I discover the most effective cure is wallpaper paste! One coat, left for 20 minutes, and the wallpaper is removed like a dream.

Why?
Yours incredulously,
N. METCALFE
Sheffield
11 January

Paternoster Square revisited

From Mr J. C. Bassett

Sir: When the proposed scheme for the redevelopment of Paternoster Square (Section Two, 8 January) first emerged, I warmed to it. I visited the exhibition in the crypt of St Paul's and thought it seemed warm and humane, in contrast to the proposals by Sir Richard Rogers and others which seem rather tired and formulaic. I was under the impression, probably incorrectly, that it would to some extent recreate the original street pattern, and maybe some of the atmosphere that existed before the Blitz.

Since then, I have become aware of the true nature of the scheme. Far from being a genuine, and people-orientated development, it is in reality a hulking steel-framed office block, a patronising transatlantic sham designed to get around the mediocre tastes of Prince Charles, and a public which won't be overjoyed at yet another office scheme.

The question is what is to be done instead. It would be nice to establish the pre-Blitz atmosphere, but this is not easy. This sort of thing has to grow of its own accord, and any development must be of quality due to its siting. Maybe the answer is something along the lines of the current proposal, but without the sham and the tweens, and with a diverse function.

Yours faithfully,
JULIAN BASSETT
London, SW2

From Mr B. W. Tullett

Sir: I have a personal interest in the development of Paternoster Square as I worked as a young teenager on the original development in the Sixties, and, as it was my first job in the con-



Carl Laubin's painting of the proposed redevelopment of Paternoster Square

struction industry, I had never seen anything so vast being built. At the time, it was obviously described as modern architecture and the shape of the future, but, even as a young lad, I thought it should have complemented St Paul's Cathedral. As St Paul's is one of our major tourist attractions, it would make the surrounding area that much more attractive if the new development and St Paul's could be thought of as one.

Yours sincerely,
B. W. TULLETT
London, E13

From Mr Roger Houghton

Sir: The fault of the Paternoster Square scheme is not its neo-classicism but its attempt to hide behind a superficial and poorly executed layer of classical style.

The classical orders are as

relevant a basis for architectural design 1,500 years after their use in the British Isles has shown them to be ideally suited to the urban environments and as adaptable to domestic use as to civic.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER HOUGHTON
Bath

From Ms Grace H. Farmer

Sir: I do not think that the proposed development should be allowed to go ahead. The proposed scheme represents a mish-mash of pastiche architecture and would not enhance the beauty of the Cathedral.

By far the best solution for the site would be to knock down all the buildings and create a park. A nicely landscaped open space would enhance the Cathedral, provide a perfect

setting for one of the country's gems, and give the City of London a much-needed park.

Yours sincerely,
GRACE FARMER
London, N5

From Mr Robin Miller

Sir: Has anyone thought of consulting two pertinent documents?

1. Wren's designs for the setting/immediate surroundings of his masterpiece, which would, surely, include open space around the entire structure as well as, I believe, wide, ceremonial stairs to the Thames, ideal for state occasions.

2. The plan, produced during the Second World War, for the post-war reconstruction of central London.

Yours sincerely,
ROBIN MILLER
London, NI

The blood of human kindness

From Dr Forest Hansen

Sir: Having regularly donated blood in America during much of our adult lives, my wife and I were surprised and offended by Louise Jury's contrast (Section Two: "Death by a thousand cuts", 11 January) of British donors with those in the US, "where donors participate ... for money".

Only a small minority donate blood for money - mostly the unemployed in large cities. Even that number has probably diminished in recent years because of HIV and hepatitis contamination.

The great majority are like British donors, giving "out of the goodness of their hearts" and expecting that the blood will be used in their home areas for those in need. Regular blood drives are held at colleges and universities as well as in business offices, and greater numbers of people typically respond with donations in emergencies.

There, as here, the giving of blood is one of those all too rare acts of pure altruism.

Yours sincerely,
FOREST HANSEN
Avechurch,
Worcestershire
11 January

Post-natal escape: sleep and bed

From Ms Mary North

Sir: Regarding the continuing correspondence about shackling pregnant and post-natal women prisoners: after the births of my three children, I was grateful to be wheeled back to the ward, because tottering was as much as I could manage.

The only escape on my mind was to a clean bed and a good sleep.

Yours sincerely,
MARY NORTH
Wirksworth,
Derbyshire
11 January

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(Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

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Stung by a fly on the wall

A sad misjudgement has marred a fine term as head of the Royal Opera, argues Polly Toynbee

No one ever likes the image of themselves as revealed in fly-on-the-wall documentaries. Hundreds of hours of film are freeze-dried into moments of tension, friction, anger or anxiety, with scant context or explanation. *The House*, a six-part documentary about the Royal Opera House, starts on Tuesday on BBC2. The wonder of it is that a canny, seasoned old television hand such as Jeremy Isaacs ever let the cameras backstage.

But those who know him understand precisely why he did it. It was a last, ill-judged bid to set right the one great failure of his eight years as General Director at Covent Garden: to make the Opera House beloved of the people. He wanted popular sentiment to swell with pride at this national treasure. Instead, those who presume to speak for the masses – the tabloids and the Terry Dickses – continue to heap contempt upon it.

He thought people should see the desperate backstage struggle to get shows on – and we do. Behind the plush, the place looks like the boiler room of a 50-year-old banana boat. Indeed, the drama of finding an unknown Carmen within hours of a crucial first night as the diva falls sick does convey the terror and the thrill of the whole bizarre enterprise.

But if Isaacs imagined this film would inspire admiration for a noble endeavour stretched to breaking point on a subsidy half that of the world's other great opera houses, he should have known better. The character who will be remembered is not the fragile little French Carmen, but the monstrous new public affairs director, who sacks everyone in sight and looks like an angry android in a Paul Smith suit.

This week Isaacs bumped into John Birt and Sir Christopher Bland dining in a restaurant. Birt asked him why he didn't like the film. Between gritted teeth, Isaacs parroted a well-known Birtism: "Because it suffers from

a bias against understanding." The trouble with fly-on-the-wall television is that incident always wins out over analysis. Part of the film focuses on rows over directors and designers overspending their budgets. In unguarded moments, Isaacs and his team display an apparently cavalier attitude towards money. Crisis follows the near-catastrophic hiring of one designer to do a huge new ballet at the same time as a new opera. A great deal of shouting in the boardroom ensues.

Aggrieved, Isaacs feels viewers might understand a little more and condemn a little less if there had been more emphasis on the financial facts: both productions mad money back. For the past three years the Opera House has broken even, and the £3.6m deficit Isaacs inherited has been reduced to £500,000.

When Isaacs leaves his post next year at 65, he bequeaths his successor an energised enterprise with a reputation for innovation and daring. An outfit once stale and mediocre, down on its artistic beam ends, was shambling its way through 20-year-old *Bohèmes* and *Toscas* in tired routines. The English National Opera and the regional companies were the

they can't see them properly. He curses the *Sun* and all those who patronise "ordinary" people by assuming them to be cloth-eared philistines. Don't they all know "Tosca" from *Carmen*. "Nessun Dorma", Mozart, Verdi, Puccini and a dozen other favourites? Hasn't the success of the three tenors shown how many "ordinary"

His most passionate supporters are those who have worked for him

happening places, while the Opera House reeked of mothball-scented furs. Now the ENO is in artistic trouble – short of ideas, enveloped in dark critical clouds. True, Isaacs has presided over some spectacular turkeys – but only a few, no more than the flip side of bravery.

He wanted to make opera accessible – simultaneous translations projected above the stage – the stuffed shirts complained of the vulgarity. Nowadays the only complaints come from those in seats where

people love opera, given the chance? He is proud of the work the opera house has done in schools. A natural romantic, he speaks lyrically of opera's transforming power.

All very well, but just how accessible can you be when you are touching people for £260 for top tickets? He is ashamed at charging some of the world's highest prices. Two or three performances a year broadcast on big screens to a packed Covent Garden piazza make only a minor dent in the

elitist nature of the business. This makes him edgy and uneasy. From a Labour-voting middle-class Hillhead family, he is the son of a GP mother and jeweller father – and a man of the left, somewhat left of New Labour. He is not even slightly seduced by the ritzy, glitzy world of the royal box.

He made his name in 1974 with *The World At War*, a 26-part blockbuster history of the Second World War, which reached audiences of 15 million. As the first head of Channel 4 in 1980, he opened up the institutionalised world of television to outsiders, new groups, experimenters and some lunatics. The result was a remarkable injection of energy. By helping to devise a system where the funding came from ITV, irrespective of ratings, it gave him the freedom to allow some outrageous things to flourish.

So his move to the most establishment post in the arts world came as a shock. Why should this naturally rebellious man choose frock-coated opera? Because he is driven to spread his own passion for opera and ballet to a wider public. Alas, it has been a mission thwarted by an impossible dilemma: he spends millions of tax-payers' hard-earned

money, yet not millions enough to let in most ordinary tax-payers at prices they can afford. Those who come after him may fare better, for everyone expects the Lottery funding rules to change to allow money not just for buildings but to fund productions and cheap seats.

What will this television documentary do for Isaacs's reputation? No justice, say his friends, defensively. It doesn't help that he looks like a rumpled, slightly-the-worse-for-wear Beethoven. Or that he always says what he thinks, straight out. The scenes of apparent chaos and in-fighting tell only part of the story. "What artistic enterprise would ever get on to the stage in an atmosphere of total calm, harmony and managerial efficiency?" wonders one seasoned observer.

Isaacs's most passionate supporters are those who have worked for him, both when he was head of Channel 4 and at the Opera House. His detractors are among the boards and governors he has worked for, which is, on the whole, the best way round: "He lacks some essential political skills for a job like this," says one. But another, who worked under him at Channel 4 retaliates: "A complete hero!"



Isaacs believes opera is for ordinary people. Now they will see his Opera House, warts and all. Rex

One nation, divided

Lady Thatcher has got Tory and Liberal traditions in a bit of a muddle, says Vernon Bogdanor

"Say what you will," Disraeli's hero Egmont declares in *Sybil* (1845), "our Queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed." "Which nation?" asks Marley, the Chartist, "for she reigns over two." "You speak of..." said Egmont hesitatingly. "THE RICH AND THE POOR."

Disraeli in the 1840s begged the Tories to combat the market policies of the Liberals which were sundering all social ties. In the 20th century, by contrast, One Nation Conservatism has seen state socialism, not liberalism, as the enemy. Anthony Eden prefigured Margaret Thatcher in championing a property-owning democracy to combat doctrines of class conflict. For it, there was no war to fight; nobody need be afraid of losing. In the Fifties, a One Nation Group was formed by Iain Macleod, Angus Maude, Reginald Maudling and Enoch Powell to press for equality of opportunity as the alternative to socialist bureaucracy and controls. More recently, however, the term "One Nation" has come to indicate coded hostility to Thatcherism and sympathy for the gentler Conservatism of the Macmillan/Heath era.

In her Keith Joseph Memorial Lecture on Thursday night, Margaret Thatcher attacked One Nation Toryism as a betrayal of the nation. That is perhaps curious. Leaders such as Disraeli and Eden were hardly noted for their cosmopolitanism, while Harold Macmillan sought to enter the European Community after a hard-headed calculation of Britain's interests and only after other diplomatic possibilities had been exhausted. His conception of Europe, moreover, was akin to that of Thatcher rather than that of Jacques Delors.

Besides, it was Margaret Thatcher herself who, as Prime Minister, turned the European Community irrevocably away from a "Europe des patries" when she signed the Single European Act, greatly extending majority voting – something with more radical effects than anything in the Maastricht treaty.

Domestically, Margaret Thatcher identified "One Nation" with state interventionism. The origins of Thatcherism, the former Prime Minister declared, are to be found not in the ideas of Disraeli but in 19th-century liberalism of the kind championed by Gladstone.

Yet Gladstone would be a very awkward recruit to the Thatcherite cause. If the Grand Old Man held to any fundamental belief, it was faith in "The

Concert of Europe". Like the Liberal Democrats today, he would have been a strong supporter of European Union as the best means of overcoming national rivalries.

Gladstone was a strong supporter also of devolution, declaring that societies were held together through "recognition of the distinctive qualities of the separate parts of great countries". He even favoured the creation of what he called "intermediate bodies" – regional parliaments, which John Major has called "barony". Here at least, Margaret Thatcher and the Prime Minister can agree. But it is difficult to regard their position as being at all Gladstonian.

Historians will probably see the Eighties as an era of Thatcherite dominance. Yet, in her two landslide elections – 1983 and 1987 – the Conservatives were unable to secure more than 42 per cent of the vote.

Margaret Thatcher found herself presiding over two nations

Nearly three-fifths of the population were hostile to Margaret Thatcher even at the height of her power.

Thatcherism, moreover, appealed more to the south of England than to Scotland or Wales or the industrial conurbations. By 1987, the Conservatives, despite their majority of 102 in the Commons, were able to secure only 10 of the 72 seats in Scotland, and eight of the 38 in Wales. In the great conurbations – Bradford, Glasgow, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield – the Conservatives won just three of the 43 seats.

Thatcherism was perhaps as much a consequence as a cause of socio-economic and cultural changes that long prefigured the Eighties, as Britain came to be polarised along geographical lines. Margaret Thatcher found herself presiding over two nations divided as much by geography as by class. The upwardly mobile, trusting and ambitious nation living in the South-east provided her landslide majorities. For the other nation, she never seemed to care very much.

The writer is reader in government, Oxford University. His *Essay on Politics and the Constitution* is being published by Dartmouth shortly.

If it's American snow, it's gotta be big

Rupert Cornwell reflects on a week of chaos, cold and unaccustomed quiet in the US capital

For me, the first intimation came exactly a week ago in the departure lounge at Zurich airport, as we returned from a skiing holiday. "Seems there's a big storm coming to the East," said someone, perusing the *International Herald Tribune*. Sure, I thought, another phoney Washington weather drama. Only this time the panic-mongers were right.

Back in DC that frigid Saturday afternoon the atmosphere was eerie, nervous yet fatalistic, as if an irresistible invading army was at the city's gates. People were glancing intermittently at a still, leaden sky. When I went to buy a few provisions, the supermarket was jammed. For the first time I bought some rock salt, a five-pound bag, which the blurb claimed could dissolve 48 times its weight in snow at a temperature of 30F. That should do the trick, I thought. A child taking on the Wehrmacht with a pop-gun would have stood a better chance.

The United States is a country of meteorological superlatives. In five years I have reported on the most destructive hurricane in modern American history (the 155mph Andrew, of August 1992, which caused \$20bn of damage), the Great Flood of the summer of 1993 (the Midwest's worst for 100 years), plus droughts, heatwaves, tornadoes, and sundry other acts of God. And now the Blizzard of '96.

The misfortune of Washington and the Mid-Atlantic region in winter is to be point of collision between warm air moving north from the Gulf of Mexico and arctic blasts descending from Canada, all mixed with plenty of moisture from the Atlantic. Thus are assembled the ingredients for a smorgasbord of precipitations: snow, freezing rain, sleet and hail, or various combinations of them. Most miserable of all is the ice storm, a Washington speciality, which in full spate produces a sinister rustling like wind through dry leaves. It turns roads and pavements into skating rinks and causes power failures by the score. Thus far, the Blizzard of '96 has generated only fine powdery snow. But never, even during the four years I lived in Moscow, have I seen so much of it in a single helping.

It started to fall around midnight on Saturday. It continued, soft and silent as a veil, through Sunday and half of Monday. By the end, in my corner of the city, 23 inches had fallen – almost two feet of the stuff, and more where it had been piled up by gusts of 35mph. Not for an instant did it stop, for 36 hours. Should the second storm, unfolding as I write, live up to billing, all records could be eclipsed, including that of 28

January 1772, when George Washington measured three feet of snow on the ground at his Mount Vernon estate.

Even if it is not the storm of the century already, it's close. Philadelphia's 31 inches between Sunday and Monday was the largest 24-hour snowfall in its history. New York's 22 inches was its third largest (100 million tons fell on the city, according to CNN). It was the third or fourth highest here in the capital. The 20-hour shutdown of Boston airport was the longest since 1978. Economic losses are climbing by billions of dollars a day. At least 100 have died as a result of the snow.

Washington is peculiarly ill-equipped for such

an ordeal. Come the first soft flakes of winter, the city fathers handle snow with the same calm and competence that British Rail brings to its commuter services. An inch or two that would not raise an eyebrow in Moscow (or New England) throws the capital of the free world into delirium tremens. These days, with the District of Columbia in receivership and possessing just a third of the functioning snow-clearing equipment of four years ago, the performance has been even more dire than usual.

Four days on from the blizzard, the bus and underground still barely work. Schools are closed. Mountains of half-cleared snow and mighty rivers of slush have turned Washington's

streets into a cross country course from the Winter Olympics.

The first sensation, of course, was utterly different. That Sunday morning, the snow was therapeutic, a humbling, cleansing reassurance that there was an alternative to the frenetic pace of American life. No prospect was more beautiful than the dreaded Washington Beltway, normally a white-knuckle commuting racetrack, transformed into an empty sea of snow, the road signs poking like fragments from the *Titanic* on the ocean bed. Closer to home, not a squeal of brakes, not a single car horn was to be heard, just the quiet occasional hiss of skiers gliding past white mounds that had once been cars. The airports, too, those temples to our times, were shut. For all its technical wizardry, America was at a standstill.

But the charm of a blizzard wears off quickly. And patience wears thin with the TV weather forecasters and their glossy coiffures, spray-on smiles and professional shortcomings that no computer graphics can redeem. They completely missed, for instance, Tuesday's follow-up storm (sheepishly described afterwards as an "unanticipated high-level atmospheric disturbance") which dumped another four inches on DC.

By Thursday, the skis were off the streets and the car was king again, the only difference being that the pedestrian's normal refuge of the pavement was unreachable, still submerged by two feet of snow. Yet the crown fits uneasily. Driving your car is fine, but where to leave it? In Washington right now, the most prized asset of all is a viable parking space. Belatedly, snow ploughs have cleared a passable corridor along the middle of the streets in my neighbourhood. But parking is a do-it-yourself and highly labour-intensive proposition. "I dug it, and I park in it," read one sign guarding a 6ft by 12ft area carved out of the surrounding tundra. Others stake out their territory with chairs and tables.

Even if you can shift the snow, where do you put it? In New York they've been dumping it into the Hudson River, but a Boston real-estate firm was less lucky when it ploughed clean snow into the harbour – only to be slapped with a \$1,000 fine for environmental pollution.

And now it's falling again. Eight inches, say the weathermen, maybe snow, maybe sleet, maybe ice, probably all three together. In Los Angeles, they're having a heatwave: the other day it was a record 87 degrees on Venice Beach. But we snowsick on the other side of the country should not get too upset. Over there, there's probably an earthquake on the way.



White-out in Washington: nearly two feet of fine, powdery snow fell in 36 hours

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Pension funds clash in City revolution

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Britain's powerful pension funds placed themselves on a collision course with the City's big market makers after throwing their weight behind Stock Exchange proposals for a radical reform of share trading in London.

The pension funds, which own some 35 per cent of UK equity, support introducing automatic order-driven dealing to the top FTSE stocks. "The investment committees would be very content to see an alternative method of dealing on the Stock Exchange, and if it is order-driven then we believe it will offer lower prices," said the National Association of Pension Funds.

"Effectively what we are after are lower costs and an effective dealing system," said a leading insurance fund manager. The Stock Exchange yesterday published its long-awaited consultation document about exactly what sort of order-matching dealing system is wanted by most market participants and how it should be introduced. It sets out detailed options of how the fully automatic order-driven facility, which electronically matches bids and offers, might take over, from or be combined with, London's traditional quote-driven system, whereby market-making firms use their capital to quote firm buy and sell prices for shares.

The published document differs in one important respect following the sacking last week of Michael Lawrence from his post of chief executive of the Exchange. His preference for a "hybrid", combining the two systems on the same screen, has been markedly toned down. The big market-makers, which

played an important role in Mr Lawrence's ousting, argued that this option was impractical. "Putting the two systems together on the same screen will have the inevitable effect of capital being withdrawn from the FTSE 100. Of course investors can say they would like a choice of competing systems for the same stocks, so they can pick the cheapest. But the question is whether practitioners find it worth their while to participate in that. I think not," said a leading market-maker.

The tone of the consultation document points rather to the more radical of the options, which is to replace the quote-driven system with an order-matching facility across the board for all stocks. Alongside it, however, there would be a so-called block trading facility, whereby the market makers would be able to take on and sell large blocks of shares off the market. This is the mechanism successfully operated in centres such as New York and Paris.

The document also offers the option of an order book for some stocks and a quote book for others. "Ask a fund manager and he will want order-driven for the big stocks to get cheaper dealing costs and quote-driven for small stocks to make sure he can always deal. Ask a market maker and he will want it precisely the other way round. That is the dilemma to be overcome," said a top market-maker.

Private client brokers and small investors have strongly urged keeping some form of market-making in the smaller stocks. The Stock Exchange said that small investors should benefit from cheaper dealing in popular stocks with an order-driven facility.

Stalemate in transatlantic talks maintains limits on foreign stakes in American carriers



Drawing the line: BA chief Robert Ayling has ruled out more investment in its US partner - at least for the present

Photograph: Edward Webb

BA halts further investment in USAir

RUSSELL HOTTEN

British Airways has abandoned plans to invest more money in USAir until the UK and US governments settle their long-running dispute over liberalising aviation markets.

BA has until the end of January to decide whether to put another \$200m into the troubled American carrier. But it would be unable to lift its shareholding above the 25 per cent limit on foreign ownership imposed by US regulators.

The British flag-carrier has already paid \$400m for 24.6 per cent of USAir, and the option would have enabled it to take

that shareholding to 34.8 per cent. But the stalemate in the negotiations to liberalise the Bermuda II treaty governing transatlantic aviation means further investment would be too risky.

The UK government was "puzzled and disappointed" after US negotiators broke off talks last year over more access to Heathrow, Gatwick and the American domestic airline market. A Department of Transport spokesman said yesterday that no further talks were planned.

Analysis was divided over whether the UK airline should put more money into USAir - part of BA's strategy of creat-

ing a global network of financial and operational alliances.

BA's new chief executive, Robert Ayling, has not so far gone public on the future of the relationship. But one company source said yesterday: "There is little point in us putting more money into USAir unless we can increase our shareholding. The company has a further option to invest \$250 within the next two years."

USAir was badly hit by recession in the American airline industry, but has seen its fortunes slowly improve. Last month Seth Schofield, USAir's departing chairman, said the company was now able to stand

on its own two feet and did not need further money from BA.

Under the Bermuda II talks Washington has refused Britain's demand to lift the foreign ownership ceiling. In turn Britain has refused the main US demand for open access to London Heathrow. The last round of talks broke up without agreement in October, closing another chapter in over four years of bitter negotiations.

Last year British Airways wrote off half its investment in USAir, after earlier saying it would not make any additional investment until USAir's financial position had improved. USAir recently moved

back into profit as a result of cost-cutting and a generally stronger market, and has predicted it will post a profit for 1995, its first positive result since 1988.

The company made profits of \$21.6m in the third quarter, on a 10 per cent increase in revenues, from \$1.75bn to \$1.87bn. "There can be no doubt that this company is now experiencing a dramatic upturn in its financial performance," Mr Schofield said at the time.

USAir provides BA with an entry into the biggest domestic airline market in the world, and may be central to an eventual link-up with American Airlines.

Granada dividend 'falls foul of IR'

Forté yesterday cast doubt on whether a special dividend of 47p offered by Granada as part of its £3.8bn hostile takeover bid for the hotels and restaurants company would be allowed by Inland Revenue, writes Matthew Horsman.

The criticisms, dismissed by Granada as "mischief-making", centred on Forté's contention that tax authorities could rule against the plan because shareholders are given an option between a dividend or cash.

"We have taken tax advice that suggests this plan may not be approved," a Forté spokesman said.

But in a statement, Granada's chief executive, Gerry Robinson, said "There is nothing that Forté has said that was not considered by us before we announced our increased offer".

The special dividend was announced last week as part of Granada's revised offer for Forté. The higher bid was worth 362p in cash per Forté share, or 373p in cash and shares. Tax-exempt institutions, including pension funds, could receive up to 385p a share because of the tax credit associated with the special dividend, Granada argued.

Forté also claimed that Granada's plan to sell up to £2bn worth of Forté's assets, including its Meridien and Exclusive hotel chains, would attract £400m in tax. Granada responded that a combination of Granada's "substantial tax cost base" in Forté, the roll-over of gains into new expenditure and the availability of £240m in tax losses which it can carry forward would make the tax consequences of the planned disposals "insignificant".

Meanwhile, Granada launched a further attack on Forté's planned share buy-back scheme, which it believes would be earnings negative on profit forecasts. It questioned whether Forté could afford its alternative generous dividend promise of 20 per cent yearly increases in each of the next three years.

Building society mergers or takeovers

- 1989 Abbey National - floated
- 1995 Cheltenham & Gloucester - taken over by Lloyds Bank
- 1996 Halifax - merges with Leeds Permanent
- 1996 National & Provincial - taken over by Abbey National
- 1997 Halifax - to be floated in spring
- Woolwich - to be floated in autumn

Who's next?

- Alliance & Leicester - flotation announcement expected soon
- Nationwide - flotation announcement possible within next 18 months
- Bradford & Bingley, Bristol & West, Portman, Britannia, Birmingham Midshires, Yorkshire - flotations may follow more society mergers or may be vulnerable to takeovers

Woolwich could face predators

NIC CICUTTI

Speculation grew in the City last night that Woolwich Building Society could be snapped up by a rival institution before its plans to become a bank are complete next year.

Potential bidders named by analysts yesterday include Royal Bank of Scotland, other high street banks, Prudential and BAI, the tobacco giant.

Tim Clarke, banking analyst at Parumore Gordon, said: "I would be surprised if a number of institutions were not currently looking into the possibility of a takeover bid."

"The announcement that

Woolwich is planning to convert to a bank, has raised a lot of opportunities for potential bidders. The society has effectively put itself in play by going public."

Mr Clarke said a potential suitor would find attractions in Woolwich's mortgage lending operation, its 4 million savers and its South-east England bias. John Stewart, operations director at Woolwich, said there had been some interest by other institutions, but no serious discussions had taken place.

He added: "We have a very good core business with consistent profit records over the years. We have been diversifying very successfully for years and all

our subsidiaries are in profit. Obviously, our board has a fiduciary duty to consider any offer but they would have to be prepared to pay a substantial premium."

A takeover bid would create an opportunity of a profit for Woolwich's savers, including those dubbed "carpetbaggers" for trying to speculate on its plans.

Any predator would have to make an offer to all the society's members, not just those who joined it before the December 31 deadline, after which new members miss out on Woolwich's bailout of shares.

Any potential bidder has 15 months, until the society's annual meeting in April next year, to

make a move. If members agree the demutualisation plans, a bid would become more difficult.

Rob Thomas, building society analyst at UBS said: "Woolwich would have considered this possibility when deciding to make its move. I don't think there are any institutions out there with the resources or the balls to do it."

Woolwich Prime Gold account holders will qualify for shares in the society's forthcoming flotation next year, contrary to a report in the Independent yesterday. Those who do not qualify are Current Account holders.

Weekend section, page 22

Apple to cut up to 3,000 jobs

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Beleaguered computer company Apple is expected to cut up to 3,000 jobs and write off up to \$80m of inventory, as the full extent of its profits collapse became apparent yesterday.

The company, which slashed pre-Christmas prices by up to 25 per cent in an effort to build sales volumes, admitted on Wednesday that its final quarter losses would be \$68m. The news sent the shares plunging by 6 per cent in New York, although the stock recovered ground in trading yesterday.

According to informed sources, Apple's Americas operation will be split into three

divisions, covering software development, the educational market, and mass consumer/home sales.

The group employs 13,000 world-wide, and had revenues last year of \$1.2bn.

The restructuring will be aimed at reversing a dramatic decline in the fortunes of one of the world's leading computer companies, with a 9 per cent market share.

Analysts said the poor performance indicated serious structural problems at the company, which had profits of \$855m just four years ago. Severe cost-cutting by competitors, particularly IBM, has forced the company to abandon its premium pricing policy. Pre-Christ-

mas prices were cut to just £750 for an entry-level Apple, from £1,000 previously. By contrast, IBM clone packages were just £500.

The price war will cut profit margins in the Christmas quarter to just 15 per cent, compared to as much as 50 per cent in 1991, when Apple managed to maintain high prices.

Cutting prices, which Apple last tried in 1993, goes against its traditional approach, which focussed on developing proprietary technology and maintaining margins through licensed distribution channels.

Despite the lower prices, Apple saw sales in the quarter climb by just 11 per cent like-for-like, compared to an in-

dustry-wide 25 per cent.

The downturn news came as 80,000 visitors attended the Macworld conference in San Francisco, normally a time when the company unveils new products. Instead, the company has maintained a low profile.

Analysts said yesterday that the future of Michael Spindler, the company's chief executive, was now in doubt. They suggested the company might have to retreat from the low-end of the market, and concentrate on niches where its user-friendly products have been popular, including publishing, which it dominates. Others suggested a takeover could be in the offing, with IBM and Sony leading the list.

Hodder sees sales grow after collapse of NBA

The collapse of the net book agreement pushed revenues at Hodder Headline, the pioneer publisher, up 10 per cent in 1995 to just under \$90m (£58m), writes Matthew Horsman.

According to unaudited figures, sales recovered strongly in the fourth quarter, following disappointing sales in the summer. The company, which left the NBA in 1994, nearly a year before the minimum price maintenance accord collapsed, said that 1996 has started strongly, fuelled by January sales at book shops.

"Not all our sales growth came from the end of the NBA," Tim Hely Hutchinson, said last night. "But it is certainly better now that all book-

IN BRIEF

£500m prison contracts

Tarmac, Costain and Securicor are among the companies which have won contracts to build two prisons in the UK worth over £250m each. Group 4 and Tarmac will build the Fazzakerley prison in Liverpool and a consortium called SSA, which includes Securicor and Costain, will build Bridgend prison near Port Talbot, Wales.

New South Wales Electricity chief

Welsh Water is to appoint John Roberts, formerly of Manweb, as chief executive of South Wales Electricity on the completion of its bid for the company. Mr Roberts was chief executive of Manweb until its takeover by Scottish Power in 1995.

Tomkins merger still delayed

Tomkins, the British conglomerate, and US car components group Gates said they were confident that last month's proposed merger would still go ahead as planned. The companies had hoped to sign contracts by the end of December, but a couple of technical issues "unrelated to the businesses" remain outstanding.

Mars reports ice-cream rival Walls to OFT

Mars, the US confectionery giant, has attacked rival Bird's Eye Walls for alleged monopoly practices in ice-cream sales and confirmed that it had lodged a complaint with the Office of Fair Trading. Trade Secretary Ian Lang is currently considering prosecution of Walls executives for allegedly misleading an earlier Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the ice cream market.

Profits warning from Rhino

Rhino Group, the video games to giftware group, warned that its 1995 results will be below market forecasts. Rhino said December sales fell short of expectations, with turnover for the quarter to December up 4.6 per cent on a like-for-like basis. The shortfall was blamed on difficulties over stock management, while gross margins had suffered due to "significant discounting" by other main high-street competitors.

FirstBus takes Mainline stake

FirstBus has paid Stagecoach £1.63m for a 20 per cent stake in Mainline Partnership, a local bus operator in and around Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster. FirstBus has also subscribed for a £3.5m secured loan note and for £366,000 of non-voting convertible deferred shares in Mainline.

Future's still cloudy for Orange float

Hutchison Whamoa denied reports that its Orange mobile telephones offshoot would go public in March. The company said no decision had yet been made. The board was still studying details of the plan, she said, although Kleinwort Benson and Goldman Sachs have been taken on as "potential float co-ordinators".

STOCK MARKETS					
1995/96 High 1995/96 Low Yield (%)					
FTSE 100	3657.30	+2.40	+0.1	3720.80	2954.20 3.93
FTSE 250	4024.60	+9.30	+0.2	4080.10	3300.90 3.64
FTSE 350	1818.40	+1.80	+0.1	1848.50	1482.40 3.67
FT Small Cap	1989.32	+3.75	+0.2	1993.11	1678.61 3.17
FT All Share	1793.42	+1.93	+0.1	1821.21	1489.23 3.81
New York	5045.23	-19.87	-0.4	5216.47	3832.08 2.30
Tokyo	20287.42	-90.50	-0.4	20689.03	14485.41 0.797
Hong Kong	10540.01	+110.19	+1.1	10573.80	6967.93 3.567
Frankfurt	2356.45	+26.94	+1.2	2356.45	1910.96 1.911

INTEREST RATES					
1 Month 1 Year Medium Bond (%) Year Ago Long Bond (%) Year Ago					
UK sterling	6.47	6.31	6.84	8.83	7.48 8.63
UK medium gilt	5.85	5.38	5.76	7.68	6.17 7.79
US long bond	0.44	0.56	2.82	4.64	-
Germany	3.06	3.34	5.91	7.52	6.72

BOND YIELDS					
1 Month 1 Year Medium Bond (%) Year Ago Long Bond (%) Year Ago					
ML Laboratories	379	19	5.3	191	9 4.5
Wimpey/Geopart	136	5	3.8	96.5	3 3.0
MAI	342	12	3.6	225	9 2.7

CURRENCIES					
Yesterday's change Year Ago					
£/\$	1.5472	+0.25c	1.5696	£/DM	0.6463 -0.11 0.657
\$/DM	1.5490	+0.40c	1.5696	£/Y	0.8456 -0.16 0.834
DM/£	0.6463	-0.25c	0.6463	DM/\$	0.6463 -0.25c 0.6463
¥/£	162.875	+¥1.022	154.64	¥/\$	105.000 +¥0.495 98.559
¥/DM	83.3	+0.3	88.3	\$/¥	0.946 -0.1 0.957

OTHER INDICATORS					
Yesterday's change Year Ago					
Oil Brent \$	17.53	-0.38	16.16	RPI	149.8 +3.10c 2.6 18 Jan
Gold \$	399.20	+0.75	379.2	GDP	106.5 -2.10c 4.3 22 Jan
Gold £	258.01	+0.06	241.243	Base Rates	-6.50pc 5.25

COMPANY RESULTS					
Turnover £ Pre-tax £ EPS Dividend					
Dawson Holdings (P)	332m (131m)	3.5m (4.5m)	36.1p (42.3p)	30p (22p)	
French (P)	15.6m (15.2m)	0.93m (1.10m)	4.89p (5.77p)	3.62p (3.02p)	
Hi-Tec Sports (P)	49.7m (58.5m)	0.81m (6.57m)	0.27p (14.22p)	nil (1.50p)	

'Independent' Money on Saturday					
In the 'Weekend' section today					
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• Medical insurance ... becomes more General	25				

When the customer must not be asked to pay

COMMENT

'Back in the days of rampant corporatism and daily government interference in business, when ministers would raise gas prices to massage the PSBR and lower them again to win election, this would not have looked out of place'

Headline: "Taxpayers and customers to bail out British Gas over £40bn of supply contracts likely to cost the company enormous losses in today's oversupplied energy markets."

Er... hold on a minute. Is this a time warp or what? Back in the age of nationalised industries, rampant corporatism and daily government interference in business, when ministers would happily raise gas prices to massage the PSBR and lower them again to help win an election, it would not have looked out of place. But today?

Could this be for real in post-Thatcherite 1996, 10 years after British Gas was abandoned through privatisation to the rigours and disciplines of the market?

The truth, it seems, is that bailing out British Gas has become a very live issue indeed, though the idea of a taxpayer and customer bail-out is for the time being only wishful thinking by British Gas, the result of an internal study and not yet put to the Government.

In the original privatisation prospectus, shareholders were told they were buying into a 25-year monopoly, with competition to be allowed only in the market for large businesses. Indeed, the prospectus said the monopoly could only be terminated with at least 10 years' notice by the secretary of state for trade and industry.

In such circumstances, British Gas managers, who were unreconstructed state

industry apparatchiks, saw no undue risk in agreeing the 15- to 20-year take or pay supply contracts that are the source of its present troubles. These stipulated that the company must pay each year for a certain volume of gas, whether or not it took delivery. Though 55 per cent of the contracts were agreed before 1986, the company went on buying, and the last three take-or-pay contracts were signed after 1991.

The argument for a bail-out is quite simple; the Government, the Monopolies Commission, the Office of Fair Trading and the gas regulator changed the rules progressively between 1988 and 1993 to introduce greater competition. As a result, British Gas was faced with a falling market share which turned the take-or-pay contracts into a nightmare – an enormous liability because it could not sell enough gas to take all the contracted supplies. Worse still, open market gas prices also fell sharply, allowing new competitors to undercut by a wide margin.

Given that this débâcle was a result of government action, British Gas argues, why should shareholders bear all the pain? This is as clear a case of false prospectus as they come. Instead of 10 years' notice, British Gas was given little more than two years' warning of the pilot scheme for the introduction of competition in the domestic market, which is to begin in the South-west this spring.

But, like much in the gas business, these

claims should not be taken at face value. What changed after privatisation was the regulatory framework, and that happened because it was gradually realised that too little had been done to introduce competition into the industry.

The prospectus made perfectly clear that British Gas was subject to a regulator – and at the time of the sale the financial risk of arbitrary actions by Ofgas was at the forefront of the debate in the City. Indeed, the prospectus spelt out the penalty for disobeying the regulator or ignoring the competition authorities, which was draconian – the loss of the monopoly.

In the electricity and water privatisations, regulatory risk has proved far less severe than investors thought at the time of privatisation, and enormous profits have been made. But with gas, and arguably telecommunications, it is considerably worse, and the shares have performed relatively badly. Indeed, the gas share price trend over the years shows how early the City grasped the scale of the risk.

The idea of roping taxpayers and consumers into a rescue plan for gas, simply because there was more interference from the regulator than expected, is a case of "heads I win, tails you lose" and is not acceptable. This is a matter between British Gas and its suppliers; the Government's role should be as a referee and no more.

And if it wants to get its offshore suppliers to the negotiating table, it had bet-

ter be a lot clearer about its own objectives. In particular, it must tell them whether any savings would be passed on to consumers. They are hardly likely to negotiate if they suspect the savings will be used to intensify competition from British Gas in exploration and production.

Will fur start to fly at the Exchange?

Nice document, shame about the timing. Had the Stock Exchange the nous to ask the market some while ago what sort of share dealing innovations it actually wants, much grief could have been spared. It might not have saved Michael Lawrence's job as chief executive, for there were so many disagreements that finally led to the cup of bile running over last week. But it would have spared the City unnecessary embarrassment as the Exchange lurched publicly from one faux pas to another, mostly connected with its clumsy efforts to push ahead with a share dealing revolution without any clear idea of the backing for its plans.

There was always plenty of evidence that big institutions wanted to see an order-driven facility for the big FT-SE stocks because they know it will cut their dealing costs. They are certainly not interested in helping the market-making middlemen improve their livelihoods any more than absolutely necessary. As one of Britain's

biggest institutional investors put it: "Clearly what the market-makers are interested in is the dealing system which maximises their p & l. For the investment community, we want that p & l to be as small as possible."

Three years ago there is no doubt the big market-makers would have dismissed out of hand an order-driven alternative. But already by last year their position was fast becoming more nuanced. Knowing the options on offer, the Stock Exchange should already then have found out what the market, and that means institutions, securities houses, big corporate lenders and small investors, favoured. It is only common sense to proceed with radical reforms on the basis of clear backing, rather than telling the market what you think is best and then hoping it finds support. If the consultation had shown broad support for the order-driven option, the market-makers would have adjusted to that. They may be powerful, but they cannot defy their clients.

The market-makers know they are heading for big changes. There will be fewer of them, and order-driven dealing will place a premium on distribution to off-load risk, along with a small number of high-powered block traders. Most importantly, the coming months will reopen the thorny debate about market-making privileges and how they fit into a new system. That should see some fur flying.

Fears grow of Gas dividend cut

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Fears are growing in the financial community that British Gas may cut its 1996 interim dividend because of costly long-term contracts with North Sea producers which are forcing the company to buy billions of pounds worth of gas it cannot sell.

Producers are resisting attempts by British Gas to renegotiate the contracts in spite of calls from the Government to resolve the issue. British Gas is also considering a range of controversial solutions, such as the offloading of some expensive contracts to new suppliers in the domestic market, or massive bank loans which would be partly repaid by the rest of the industry. But it stresses that nothing like this could be done without the support of ministers.

One City analyst said: "If they fail to make progress on the long-term contracts during the spring, I think they will cut the interim dividend. I know this fear is shared by several institutional investors and I see no will-

ingness on the part of producers to help sort things out."

According to another analyst: "Institutions are dead scared they will cut the dividend. Other than the dividend, why would they be in British Gas at the moment?"

In November British Gas announced an historic loss of £181m in the third quarter after

£83m in provisions related to the long-term contracts. The company also said it would be forced to make a £520m pre-payment in the final quarter for gas not used.

Richard Giordano, the chairman, called on the Government to help the company renegotiate these "take or pay" contracts, the effect of which was

impossible to quantify. He said that the situation would be exacerbated by the introduction of domestic competition in April.

The row escalated this week when the Government confirmed it may consider a levy on British Gas's rivals to help offset the cost of the "take or pay" deals. British Gas has argued that the contracts were signed

when it was a monopoly and could be sure of selling the gas. It believes that because the Government decided to end the monopoly it should help to find a solution to the problem.

The Department of Trade and Industry may allow for the levy through a provision in new licences for rival suppliers which need to use British Gas pipes. But a spokeswoman said that no decision had been taken. Should it be included, it would be an "insurance policy" in case the industry failed to solve its own problems and would not necessarily mean that a levy would be introduced.

The Gas Consumers' Council has attacked proposals for a levy on the grounds that the consumer would ultimately pay. Ian Powe, GCC director, said: "There are public issues at stake here. Whoever is responsible for the situation it is not the consumer and at this stage we must resist attempts to make customers pay."

The council also wants the Government to forgo £170m in North Sea levies which British Gas pays each year.



Richard Giordano: Wants the Government to help in solving the row

Photograph: FT

Beazer cries 'foul' over Trafalgar's Ideal sale

DAVID HELLIER

The fight for Ideal Homes looked set to escalate last night. Beazer Homes, one of Britain's biggest housebuilders claims it has been shut out of the bidding by Ideal's owners, Trafalgar House and is considering writing to its shareholders in an attempt to block the deal.

Trafalgar's favoured buyer for Ideal is Persimmon, which has been granted a period of exclusivity by Trafalgar House to put together an offer for the business.

Analysts believe it is prepared to pay around £156m – slightly above the £150m book value of the business. Persimmon may also assume some of the housebuilding subsidiary's debts.

City observers yesterday noted the close relationship between Trafalgar House and Persimmon. Simon Keswick, Trafalgar's chairman, is known to be friendly with Persimmon's chairman Duncan Davidson

and his brother, Sir Chips Keswick, is a non-executive director of Persimmon and chairman of Hambros Bank.

Sources close to Beazer Homes said that they could think of no rational business reason why Trafalgar House had not sat down to consider its bid.

They said they would wait to see the final details of the Persimmon offer before deciding what action to take. "It is possible that the offer will be hardened now that our interest is publicly known. In such a case it will be interesting to see what effect this has on Persimmon's shareholders," one source said.

City analysts say Beazer may be prepared to pay between £160 and 170m for the Ideal Homes business, and a Beazer spokeswoman said this figure was "not unrealistic".

Trafalgar House has already said that any offer by Persimmon would be put before shareholders at an extraordinary

general meeting. A spokesman said that the agreement with Persimmon offers a "highly satisfactory outcome" for the group.

"A number of approaches for the Ideal Homes business were made and all were considered very carefully. But the Persimmon deal was viewed as the best way forward for Trafalgar House."

Trafalgar needs a sale to reduce its borrowings – but its beleaguered shareholders will be hoping that it gets the highest price possible for a division which contributes a sizeable part of the group's UK profits.

Housebuilding was the most profitable division for Trafalgar and made profits of £28.4m last year, of which the Ideal Homes subsidiary contributed £19m.

A successful purchase for Persimmon would make it one of the country's leading housebuilders but it will need to have a share issue to raise money for the deal.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

The world turned upside down

When a company is in the business of selling unit trusts, it has a vested interest in whipping up the enthusiasm of audiences at its presentations for the markets and sectors it has positions in. Even knowing that, however, nothing can quite prepare the innocent financial adviser for the evangelical onslaught of a GT Global sales pitch.

Behind the tub-thumping drama, however, yesterday's pitch to London's financial community, the latest stop on a round-Britain roadshow, threw up a torrent of fascinating ideas for investors, one of the more thought-provoking of which was the proposition that the relationship between equities and gilts has shifted, if not permanently then for the foreseeable future.

Inflation has shaped the investment landscape for so long now that it is hard to imagine a world where real assets such as houses and equities (that have a claim on the real assets of companies) do not sharply outperform paper ones such as bonds (gilts) and, particularly, cash.

Since 1972 equities have on average increased in capital value by 1 per cent more than the rate of inflation, maintaining the real value of investments and then some. Gilts by contrast have slumped in real terms, losing 90 per cent of their value in inflation-adjusted terms.

Since the beginning of 1990, however, that familiar picture has been overturned. Over the past five years, gilts have marginally outperformed equities (on a total return basis, which includes dividends). The effect has not been confined to the UK either – if anything the comparison is even more striking on a global basis.

Why should this be so? The answer appears to lie in the impact of inflation on the returns of different assets. In the 10 years from 1975 to 1985, inflation averaged 12 per cent a year and equities out-

performed gilts by 13 per cent a year. During the following 10 years, however, inflation was reined in to just 5 per cent a year on average and the outperformance was reduced to just 4 per cent. If GT is right and inflation ends the year at just 1.5 per cent (admittedly a tall order), gilts are likely to continue to be a relatively attractive investment for the first extended period in decades.

But don't write off equities. As Bob Farrell, Merrill Lynch's senior investment adviser in New York, pointed out earlier this week, demographic changes in the US have created one of the most unexpected phenomena of the 1990s. In the past 10 years, equities have increased from 36 per cent of total household assets to 32 per cent, a shift that has been one of the largest drivers of the Dow's current bull run and especially of the share prices of US stockbrokers such as Merrill Lynch itself and Charles Schwab, the discount brokerage which last year took over our own ShareLink.

The reason for the increasing popularity of shares seems to be the US's age profile. As the chart below shows, equity holdings appear to track the percentage of the workforce over the age of 35. In other words, older workers, fretting about retirement and the inadequacy of state provision for the elderly have a tendency to put more of their money into long-term savings plans, mainly equities.

The UK of course is not the US but it seems plausible that the same forces will drive equity holdings here up from the 6 per cent of household assets they currently represent to closer to the 18 per cent they reached in the late 1950s.

That will be good news for stock markets as a whole. Specifically, it will be good news over the next few years for the companies whose stock in trade is handling other people's money. A portfolio of financial companies such as

Mercury Asset Management, M&G, King & Shaxton (which owns the broker Greig Middleton and Allied Provincial), BWD and Lloyds Abbey Life could be very rewarding for the remainder of the decade.

Argos catches Nineties mood

Argos, the catalogue retailer, has been true to its recent excellent form over the crucial Christmas selling period. Trading figures out yesterday showing a 14 per cent rise in sales for the five weeks ahead of the festive season have translated into an underlying increase of 8 per cent on like-for-like store space. Even if not up with the double-figure growth recorded by Dixons and Carphone, these are impressive figures, particularly after strong Christmas performances in both 1993 and 1994.

But Argos has been such a steady performer that yesterday's announcement surprised no one. Profits forecasts for the full year are therefore only being edged up or held at around £120m for last year, which would represent a 20 per cent increase on 1994.

The company's formula of no-frills, value for money retailing just off the high street has really caught the mood of the cost-conscious Nineties. After a blip at the beginning of the decade, when profits slumped to £52.9m, Argos has grown steadily. And the formula still has a way to go before it reaches the whole country. The 370-strong chain of traditional stores has the potential to reach close to 500, the company believes, while it reckons it could more than double the number of superstores to between 100 and 120. It has also seen off the threat from discount clubs like CostCo and Warehouse Club and with low rental and labour costs well below high street rivals, it is well placed to keep them at bay.

The main threat comes from the £200m cash which is currently burning a hole in Argos's balance sheet. The company is keen to diversify, but shareholders will remember the previous venture into furniture retailing, Chesterton, which left a £12.5m hole in 1992's figures.

First Stop, a discount format currently on trial, has gone well in its first few weeks' trading, as have three mini-stores serving smaller populations. Chastened by its previous experience, management is likely to be cautious about more adventurous acquisitions and might rather return cash to shareholders. But the shares, up 4p at 565p, reflect the quality on a prospective multiple of 21. Hold.

Can our Business Deposit rates match the 'Big Four' banks?

Bank	% Gross rate
The Co-operative Bank	5.93
Barclays	5.00
Lloyds	5.45
Mitland	5.22
Nat West	5.875

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Balance Band	Instant	30 Day	90 Day	
£500 - £9,999	3.25	3.75	4.46	
£10,000 - £49,999	3.93	5.00	5.15	
£50,000 - £249,999	4.25	5.25	5.75	
£250,000+	4.96	5.75	6.00	

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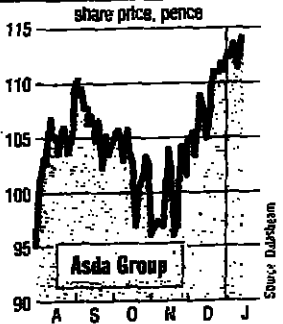
Are you? A limited company or society ☐ A sole trader or partnership ☐ A school ☐ An unincorporated miscellaneous organisation ☐

market report/shares

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100
3657.3 +2.4
FT-SE 250
4024.6 +9.3
FT-SE 350
1818.4 +1.8
SEAQ VOLUME
759.9m shares,
29,811 bargains
Gilt Index
95.46 +0.13

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Insecure London is unhinged by a volatile New York

Shares were unhinged by a volatile New York. For much of the session the FT-SE 100 index sported a double-figure gain and early US exuberance suggested Footsie would be encouraged to end the day on a high note.

In the event it managed a modest plus - 2.4 points. The stock market has been under the whip of Wall Street throughout the week. As American shares, particularly high-tech shares, have wilted and the Dow Jones Average suffered sharp falls, London has looked decidedly insecure.

Footsie has managed to contain its fall to 47.2 points in often busy trading. But it will not be able to display quite so much resilience if US shares continue to weaken.

In the past year New York has comfortably outpaced London, prompting some observers to take the view that the close association between the two

markets may be on the wane.

However, although the gap has widened it seems it is still true that every time New York catches a cold then London shivers.

With snow-bound Washington still unable to resolve the budget crisis and the move to lower interest rates seemingly on hold, the prospects for a sharp New York revival look slim.

Fortie was again the most actively traded blue chip with turnover put at 25.5 million and the price firming to 369p.

The shares have been the play of arbitrageurs and the more nimble footed institutions this week. Many have now taken their profits and retired.

They are looking for the next round of bid action and insurance and supermarket seem to be the favourites.

GRE, unchanged at 261p, was restrained by Société Générale Strauss Turnbull sell advice but there are sugges-



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

tions it is in talks with BAT Industries, which originally wanted the fund management side but has been persuaded to mount a bid for the company.

Even the big supermarkets were for the first time in a long while under the speculative gaze. Asda reached 114p, highest since 1989. J Sainsbury gained 7.5p to 404p and Argill, the Safeway chain, 6.5p to 342p.

Wm Morrison, one of the smaller groups which is no stranger to takeover speculation, put on 4p to 150p.

Rumours continued to swirl around Fortie. When Charles (now Lord) Fortie successfully defended the group against Allied Domecq in the 1970s he

and his friends moved into the market to bolster the defence. The Fortie family has around 10 per cent and may be tempted again to increase its stake. And the company has many supporters, including Whitbread which hopes to buy its budget hotels and roadside restaurants.

Christies International, the auctioneer where Bahamas-based Joseph Lewis has built a 25 per cent shareholding, fell 9p to 191p as the market was ruffled by an 800,000 overnight trade at 195p.

MAL on the NatWest Securities break-up suggestion, added 12p to 342p. But the house unsettled the P&O

building and shipping group.

In what was generally a favourable research paper NatWest lowered its profit forecasts, with last year, cut £15m to £305m, this year from £360m to £320m and next from £410m to £360m; it left the shares down 13p at 474p.

Enterprise Oil gained 13p to 382p on a successful oil test in southern Italy. With crude prices lower, other oils were mixed - British Petroleum and Shell moved in opposite directions.

Costa, the hard pressed contractor, edged ahead to 73p. Arabi interests now account for 37 per cent with Raymond International of Saudi Arabia holding 18 per cent and Mohamed Abdulmohsin Kharafi & Sons of Kuwait 19 per cent.

Shandwick, the public relations group, firmed to 41p as a \$40m loan note placing removed worries of a cash call.

The planned Lonrho merger pushed the shares 3p higher to 195.5p but Storehouse's unexpectedly disappointing trading statement continued to take its toll, down 4.5p to 296.

Some of the bio babes turned in lusty performances. British Biotech rose 50p to 1.783p and Scotia 18p to 558p after 578p. M.L. Laboratories added 19p to 379p.

Goldsmith shaded to 211p; it would like to buy the Ernest Jones jewellery chain which parent Signet is offering for sale as well as its H Samuel business. Signet's 6 per cent preference shares rose 7.75p to 52.25p and the ordinary shares 0.5p to 16.5p.

Edge Properties, a specialist developer of retail sheds which emerged out of the BDA property group, opened at 96p, moving to 100p. The reverse takeover was struck at 85p.

TAKING STOCK

□ Dawson Holdings, a newspaper distribution group owning half of the Sunningdale Dawson operation, has employed a remarkable run on the Alternative Investment Market since moving from the now discontinued 4.2 market. It was a founder member of AIM in the summer, opening at 480p. The shares, following results yesterday, jumped 120p to 1,010p. Profits fell £1m to £3.5m but an encouraging trading statement and a dividend lift have expanded the market. Dawson has expanded in the US and Spain and other deals are thought to be under consideration.

□ Card Clear, which produces equipment to beat credit card frauds, gained 6p to 60p following a deal with Mobil. The petrol giant, with 700 petrol stations, is installing Card Clear's anti-fraud system in most outlets.

SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: ex rights = Ex-dividend = Ex-all = Unlisted Securities. Market is suspended for Friday 13th Jan. All prices are in pence.

THE INDEPENDENT INDEX

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UK Company News 02
Foreign Exchange 03

Sorting Rates 04
Button Report 05
Wall St Report 06
Tokyo Market 07

Privatisation Issues 08
Water Shares 09
Electricity Shares 10
High Street Banks 11

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Call cost 35p per minute (cheap rates), and 40p at all other times. Call charges include VAT.

MARKET LEADERS: TOP 20 VOLUMES

Stock	Vol '95	Stock	Vol '95	Stock	Vol '95	Stock	Vol '95
Fortis	25,000	Harman	12,000	Lucas	9,700	BAT Ind.	7,700
Barclays	20,000	London	10,000	Lloyds TSB	9,000	Bankwest	7,400
Asda Group	18,000	SP	10,000	General Elec.	9,000	BT	7,100
Rate Rayer	12,000	Sainsbury	10,000	Granada	8,000	London Elect.	8,000
BT	12,000	Reed	10,000	Tesco	6,000	Tesco	5,000

FT-SE 100 INDEX HOUR BY HOUR			
Open 3657.7 up 11.8	11.00 3659.1 up 4.2	14.00 3668.5 up 13.6	
09.00 3662.7 up 6.8	12.00 3666.2 up 11.3	15.00 3669.1 up 14.2	
10.00 3662.2 up 7.3	13.00 3666.3 up 11.4	16.00 3669.3 up 6.7	
		Close 3657.3 up 2.4	

High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg
BANKS, MERCHANT									
105.0	104.0	Barclays	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Barclays	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	London	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	London	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Lloyds TSB	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Lloyds TSB	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Bankwest	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Bankwest	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	BT	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	BT	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	J Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	J Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Fortie	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Fortie	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Asda Group	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Wm Morrison	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Argill	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	J Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	J Sainsbury	105.0	+1.0
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105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Enterprise Oil	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	British Petroleum	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shell	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Costa	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Arab	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Christies	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Mal	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	NatWest	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Shandwick	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Edge Properties	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0	105.0	104.0	Card Clear	105.0	+1.0
105.0	104.0	Dawson Holdings	105.0	+1.0					

ATHLETICS: Britain's leading lady is taking the first tentative steps back on track after a year in which she has endured the pain of serious injury as well as losing her world 400 metres hurdles record. **Mike Rowbottom** reports

Adversity brings maturity for Gunnell

A single figure laps the track at Crawley Stadium, accompanied by the sound of lorries on the bypass and the harsh cries of seagulls drawn inland by freezing weather as they wheel overhead.

A crowd waddles across the infield. More lorries pass. The wind chill factor, as the afternoon gives way to evening, is around -12C. The figure embarks on another lap.

The fates which carried Sally Gunnell to Olympic, world, European and Commonwealth titles have brought her to this bleak place in an attempt to turn fortune's wheel full circle after a year-long plunge into injury which caused her to doubt whether she would compete again.

The bone-chilling wind bears a clear imperative: go home; get warm. But Gunnell sets her face against it. Atlanta calls, and she has promises to keep.

Britain's most successful female athlete of all time is quite different now to the giggly, oc-

'I was in tears every time I started to stride. I never thought I'd be in so much pain'

asionally gauche character who made her breakthrough at 400 metres hurdles in the Barcelona Olympics of 1992. The suffering of the last year, as much as the achievements of the previous three, have effected the change.

Gunnell's maturity has been well marked by Bruce Longden, who has coached her throughout her career. "I have seen it for some time," he said. "Last year made her realise a lot more about herself, the trials and tribulations of it all. She has always been a tough character, but I think it has made her even tougher. It's a case of 'been there, done that' for her. Now she's been seriously injured, and come back."

"Until she had her injury, everything had rolled along relatively smoothly for her. Suddenly she found a large buffer in her way and she has had to deal with it."

The buffer in question emerged around this time last year. It was not, as was first feared, an Achilles tendon injury, but a growth of a bone spur in her right heel which was diagnosed belatedly and removed surgically in August. Dealing with it, however, was not as simple an operation.

"First of all it was a matter of learning to walk again," Gunnell recalled. "It was real-



Sally Gunnell, who is ready to smile once more as she looks forward to the Olympics after the most excruciating 12 months of her career

Photograph: David Ashdown

ly weird to think that this person hobbling around was me."

Her situation was not without its lighter moments - she chuckled as she recalled the presentation for a sports bra which she gave while on crutches. "In a way I think it worked in my favour, but I had to laugh at myself."

But the laughter ceased in the autumn months after the crutches had been set aside. "That was the worst time for me," she said. "I had expected to come out and start running again straight away, but I seemed to be worse off. I thought, 'Eight months. For

Christ's sake, how long is this going to go on for?'"

"I felt as if I'd been patient all summer and I was desperate to get on with it. I would have a good day, and I would think 'Yes! Then I would have a week when I would hurt again. I was in tears every time I started to stride. I never ever thought I'd be in so much pain."

For the first time in her life, Gunnell was in the disturbing territory which so many talented athletes have had to traverse. Roger Black could have told her about it. Derek Redmond could have told her

about it. Liz McColgan could have told her about it. But in the end it is a place you have to visit, and leave, alone.

The journey back has been long and fraught. Like any other athlete who has suffered serious injury, her outlook has altered. She runs where she can on grass to cushion the stress on her foot. And she has to make calculations about the relative softness of the tracks near her home outside Brighton.

The decision to train at Crawley, for instance, had been prompted by her feeling that the surface at Horsham

stadium which she has used for years was becoming a bit hard.

Even getting on to the windswept track at Crawley was not straightforward. Locked gates frustrated her first attempt to enter the stadium, and the path back to the sports centre's reception was cordoned off with a crazed superabundance of tape which suggested the work of Gordon Brittas.

Having gone the long way round to the main desk, Gunnell struggled to make her request for access heard above the screaming saws and echoing hammers of whatever ren-

ovation work was in progress. You could not help thinking that Gunnell's exotic French rival, Marie-José Pérec, would not be encountering similar local difficulties at the University of Irvine track in California.

Gunnell has had more than enough time to contemplate her chances of retaining the Olympic 400m hurdles title this summer. Pérec, Olympic and world 400m champion, finished her first full season of hurdling last year with a personal best of 53.21sec in only her sixth race - as compared with the world record of 52.74

which Gunnell set in winning the 1993 world title.

Since then, of course, that record has been lowered by Gunnell's American friend Kim Batten who, pushed to the line by her compatriot Tonja Buford, recorded 52.61 in last summer's World Championships at Gothenburg.

The effect upon Gunnell was immediate - as part of the BBC commentary team in Sweden, she had to interview Batten as she came off the track. "I had so many questions I wanted to ask her, but I was also in shock," she recalled. "It was only later that night that I

thought, 'Oh God. That's your world record gone as well. What a bomber of a year'."

She is in no doubt that the record is due to be lowered again in Atlanta, especially if she, Pérec, Batten and Buford are all fit.

"There is no doubt the world record is going to go again," she said. "I think it is in Pérec's mind, and I'm sure she's capable of it. But I also think Kim, Tonja and myself can do it. There are four of us, and if we are all fit it is going to be a great race - so long as I can come out on top. And I believe I'm capable of doing it. Technically I really believe I'm better than the others."

Ultimately, each athlete concentrates on herself - and Gunnell is now in Stellenbosch to train in conditions a climatic world away from Crawley. It is here that she will do her first serious hurdling.

"You don't ever forget how to hurdle after doing it for so long," she said. Even so, she is pushed to recall the last time

'I think this year off was meant to be. If you can't do something you love, you want it back badly'

she raced competitively over the hurdles - 9 September, 1994, when she won in the IAAF World Cup final at Crystal Palace.

A year and a half ago in Helsinki, shortly before she completed her set of international titles by winning the European Championships, Gunnell sat underneath a statue of Finland's legendary athlete Lasse Viren and spoke about the difficulty of finding new goals to pursue. The truth was that she was the best. She had done it all.

It is tempting to speculate that, at a subconscious level, the only challenge she had left was injury. She does not concur with such a hypothesis, but acknowledges that her problem may have been exacerbated by her attempts to push herself even harder in training.

"I must admit," she said, "that last January I was on that fine line of being the fittest I've ever been and..." She paused for a moment, mentally taking in her trials of the last 12 months. "As I look at it now," she went on, "I think this year off was meant to be. When you can't do something you love, you want it back badly." If Olympic titles were awarded for desire and determination, Gunnell could already count on a second gold.

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THE QUESTIONS

Q1 Which of the following is an ice hockey term referring to play being re-started?

- A: Face off
- B: Hit off
- C: Bully off

Q2 How many points does it take to win a single table tennis game, assuming scores are not level?

- A: 21
- B: 15
- C: 10

Q3 Which cricketer holds the record for the highest number of runs scored in a single Test innings?

- A: Graham Gooch
- B: Brian Lara
- C: Viv Richards

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THE INDEPENDENT

The manager, David Whittle, was not worried yesterday that Malaysia, one of Britain's seven opponents in Barcelona, would be given a preview. He said: "We play them late in the tournament and they will have had plenty of time to watch us in Barcelona. They are a county-side type of team, but we'll give the tourists in the crowd all we've got as the toughest opposition we will face at this stage."

Whittle added: "We have no injury problems and now need to cap the excellent preparation we have been able to make during the past few weeks." Since coming together at the end of November Britain have played eight international matches, and apart from a draw against Argentina, they have won the remaining games, scoring 29 times in the process.

Malaysia, who progressed rapidly up the world rankings under Australian coach, Murray Walsh, in the lead-up to the Barcelona Olympics, finished three places behind Britain, in ninth, subsequently partnering company with Wales. Currently coached by the German Volker Knapp, they appear to be on the up and can be expected to give Britain the test they want. Their centre-forward, Shankar Ramu, has played for a couple of seasons for Carmarck in the National League.

Britain seem likely to give an extended run to Soma Singh at left-half with the rest of the starting line-up looking settled.

BIGGEST BATTLES (Preliminary) vs. Malaysia (Reopening) vs. Ireland vs. Australia
vs. France vs. Spain vs. Portugal
vs. Finland vs. Hungary, Iceland, Netherlands
Carmarck, Soma Singh vs. Scotland; C. Mayner, C. Mayner vs. Scotland
Ireland vs. Scotland
Australia vs. New Zealand
France vs. Belgium
Spain vs. Portugal
Portugal vs. Greece
Netherlands vs. Yugoslavia
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sport

Hillier did not suggest, incidentally, that he thought the bag was a gift and, in any case, he intended to give it back at a later date

One piece of football news was buried this week under the pile of old baggage which surrounded Terry Venables' decision to hang up his England tracksuit. David Hillier, the Arsenal midfielder player, admitted in court that he had stolen a briefcase belonging to a Danish businessman.

It seems that on their return from a holiday, Hillier, along with Wayne Burnett of Bolton Wanderers, spotted the case apparently abandoned in a bus stop at Gatwick Airport and decided to liberate it. In fact, its owner had merely left it there while he went to retrieve his car.

The case contained £3,000-worth of clothes and computer equipment, which might be considered a disappointingly small haul compared to the amounts other former Arsenal employees have found in bags left lying around by Scandina-

vian businessmen. Hillier did not suggest, incidentally, that he thought the bag was a gift and that, in any case, he intended to give it back at a later date.

Instead, the player threw himself at the magistrate's mercy, saying that he was distraught at his stupidity and that his form had dipped to such a degree since the incident, what with all the guilt and worrying, that he was now on the transfer list. The magistrate accepted his plea, although a closer observer of the game would have pointed out that it wasn't necessarily the crime: anybody's form would suffer if they were obliged to share the midfield with John Jensen and Martin Keown.

And a more astute legal process might have asked questions about the Arsenal youth system which helped develop Hillier's talent. He

is a graduate of an operation which also produced Ray "Pizza" Parlour, who got into trouble in Hong Kong after a Dennis Wise-style altercation with a taxi driver. There is also Paul Merson, whose all-round personal problems led to a near-breakdown and Kevin Dennis, who never made it into the first team, not so much because he wasn't talented but because in September 1993 he was sentenced to 30 months for manslaughter.

At Dennis's initial hearing, the north London club, showing admirable loyalty to an employee, asked the magistrate if the case could be brought forward as they had a car waiting outside to take the player down to a reserve match. And we must not forget the Arsenal youth system's most decorated old boy, Tony Adams, who served 56 days of

Jim White



ON SATURDAY

a four-month sentence for drink-driving in December 1990. An intriguing roll-call.

Luckily for Hillier, the magistrate decided not to delve too closely and simply to fine him £750. Thus the player missed the chance to join

football's most exclusive squad: those who have served time. Bring them together, and the British Lags XI would make quite a handy team.

The spine would have been constructed from the Sheffield Wednesday trio, Peter Swan, Tony Kay and David "Bronco" Layne, jailed for four months in 1965 for match-rigging. They might be getting on a bit now, but once would have been handy for helping the lads secure a result.

Alongside them would be yet another product of the marble halls of Highbury, Peter Storey, a double winner with the Gunners and a double time-server too: he was given two years in 1980 for plotting to counterfeit gold half-sovereigns and then 28 days in 1990 for smuggling pornographic videos.

Ricky Otto of Birmingham (three years for robbery in 1987) and Jamie Lawrence of Doncaster (26 months for robbery in 1992) might have been useful additions to the team when it required some kit in a hurry, and endless injections of enthusiasm could be provided by Mickey Thomas, the evergreen Wrexham winger who was given 18 months in 1993 for passing forged banknotes (although it might be advisable to check his match fee carefully before accepting it).

You wouldn't let any of the rest of the squad anywhere near the wheel of the team bus without sufficing the air first: George Best (1984), Mick Quinn (1987), Jan Molby (1988), skipper Tony Adams (1990) and Terry Fenwick (1991) were all sent down for offences involving driving while over-refreshed. Or, in-

deed, to let the team's latest cap, Duncan Ferguson, anywhere near the opposition.

Hillier, although he would have made a fine contribution in a selfless fetching and carrying role, probably won't be losing much sleep about not being picked for the side. A £750 fine, public humiliation and a criminal record might be regarded as serious enough recompense for his moment of stupidity, but things could have been much worse.

Judging by the way in which the leading contenders are running away from it as if from a man possessed by a terminal case of halitosis, if the magistrate had really wanted to punish the player he would have given him the sentence everyone in football fears: the job of England manager.

Seles relishes belated return

A few additions have been made to the Australian Open, which starts on Monday, and the Victoria parliament has it in mind to change the name of the splendid setting from Flinders Park to Melbourne Park, accentuating the city rather than an English navigator.

Two new show courts are the latest embellishments, along with fluorescent tennis balls. Some of the female players would like to tell the organisers where to shove them, equal prize-money having been abandoned except in the case of the singles champions. Otherwise the place remains largely as Monica Seles remembers it from her last visit in 1993.

Having suffered a traumatic experience in the meantime, however, Seles could be forgiven for not recollecting a speech made on the court by the Channel 7 announcer, Bruce McAvaney, after she had defeated Steffi Graf, 4-6, 6-3, 6-2, to win the title for the third consecutive year. "Well, this might not make much sense to Monica," McAvaney said, "but we used to have a thoroughbred named Phar Lap and he had a very big heart and so does Monica Seles. She turned 21 today. 21 straight victories here at Flinders Park; again the champion." But how was he to know that the analogy he drew between Seles and the folk hero of the antipodean turf would become so frighteningly apt?

Phar Lap (Maori for Red Lightning) was shot at from a moving car days before winning the Melbourne Cup in 1930, and traces of arsenic were found in the chestnut gelding's body after he died mysteriously in California in April 1932, two weeks after winning a race in Mexico. Three months after Seles left Flinders Park in 1993, the 19-year-old was stabbed in the back by a Graf obsessive, Gün-

ther Parche, during a change-over while playing in Hamburg. She did not make a comeback until July last year, having been out of the game for 27 months.

"When Seles played Graf I had a great view, close up from a little seat next to the court," McAvaney said. "It was one of the best matches I've ever seen. I thought Graf was going to win early. Seles looked as if she was struggling, and she just seemed to show tremendous fortitude. She displayed all the great characteristics of champions, refusing to give in, and Phar Lap came to mind. I'll be pretty careful saying anything this year about her. I can assure you."

Seles - while expressing disappointment that Graf is unable to resume their rivalry, having undergone foot surgery - is delighted to be returning to the place where she won the last of her eight Grand Slam singles titles. "One of the best memories, after the US Open of last year, is of Australia '93," she said. "I love the stadium, I love the court."

She has an unblemished record of three consecutive Australian Open championships, but only just. Her first visit, in 1991, almost ended in defeat in the semi-finals when she was match point down to the American Mary Joe Fernandez at 5-6, 30-40 in the third set. Fernandez netted an attempted winner and Seles edged the match, 6-3, 0-6, 9-7. She went on to become the youngest Australian champion (17 years, one month, 24 days) by defeating Jana Novotna in the final. Graf withdrew because of illness on the eve of her opening

match in 1992, Seles defeating Fernandez in straight sets in the final, but the German won the title for a fourth time in 1994, when counselling had supplanted tennis on Seles's agenda.

A year ago, the fact that the women's singles would be devalued by the absence of both the injured Graf and the rehabilitating Seles was offset to a degree by media preoccupation with Andre Agassi, who finally arrived and made a winning debut at the championships.

The guarantee of a new women's champion, someone who would break the Graf-Seles monopoly which had existed since the tournament moved to the rubberised concrete of Flinders Park from the lawns of Kooyong in 1988, only became a novelty when the victor turned out to be Mary Pierce and not Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, the strong favourite.

Pierce, who had been subjected to a difficult upbringing by a father who was disruptive both on and off the court, grasped her opportunity. The tall blonde dominated the final with her potent groundstrokes, defeating Sanchez Vicario in straight sets.

Seles is wary of the situation. "I think Mary Pierce will be very tough because of how well she did last year," she said, perhaps applying the logic that a champion's confidence is replenished on returning to the scene of a triumph.

The fact is that Pierce, who marks her 21st birthday on the opening day of the tournament, has provided scant evidence to suggest that her game has improved since that initial Grand Slam success. At the



Mary Pierce (left), last year's Australian Open winner, has a motivated Monica Seles (right) to contend with this year

Photographs: Reuters/AP

French Open, where she caused a sensation in 1994 by overwhelming Graf to reach the final, Pierce lost a fourth-round match to Iva Majoli of Croatia in straight sets.

That prompted Pierce's coach, Nick Bollettieri, to send her to the Mayo Clinic to check if her disappointing performances were related to a series of illnesses and injuries which had affected her during the spring (a kidney infection and strains to the shoulder, arm and groin). She passed a rigorous physical examination.

In June, Wimbledon finally caught a glimpse of the Canadian-born, American-raised Frenchwoman, although not much more than that as she fell to a compatriot, Nathalie Tauziat, in the second round. There was further disappointment at the US Open, where Pierce lost to the American Amy Frazier in the third round.

Pierce has spoken of a contradiction between her tennis persona - a mixture of prima donna and nervous wreck - and the way she behaves away from the court. While allowances

can be made for her awful experiences as a teenager on the tour, the underlying problem with her play continues to be the hit-or-miss nature of her style.

If, for Seles, 1993 began brilliantly and turned into a nightmare, Pierce can look back on the year with contrasting feelings. It was in 1993 that she finally broke free from the disturbing influence of her father, Jim, who was banned from tournaments. In June that year, while endeavouring to rebuild her career, Pierce visited the French coach, Pierre

Barthes, who asked her what she felt she needed to improve. "I don't know how to play," she said. "I don't know why I win. I don't know why I lose."

Some would argue that the dilemma remains, that because there is no margin for error in Pierce's approach, her occasional spectacular performances belie a general lack of consistency.

Time is on her side, of course, and she has not come so far in such trying circumstances without being blessed with resilience. Her mother, Yannick,

once said: "She's strong, my daughter. If she wasn't, her rackets already would be in the closet."

Seles is aware that plenty of eager contenders are hoping to ambush her, mentioning in particular Sanchez Vicario, Gabriela Sabatini ("If she's playing really well"), and Conchita Martinez. Bearing in mind Seles's knee, ankle and viral problems since the US Open, it seems unlikely to anticipate a one-horse race. And if she does run away with it, no comparisons, please.

Rusedski faces Becker

Greg Rusedski is braced for a battle of the big hitters in the first round of the Australian Open after he was paired with Boris Becker in yesterday's draw. Another Briton, Tim Henman, also faces a stiff first-round test against Petr Korda, of the Czech Republic.

Rusedski, who claims to have the fastest serve in the world, will know that when he meets the world No 3 at Melbourne's Flinders Park next week he will have to upset the odds, after bookmakers installed Becker as 10-1 joint third favourite.

However, Rusedski is enjoying a run of good form, having made it into yesterday's semi-finals of the Peters International tournament in Sydney, where he lost to Todd Martin.

Pete Sampras, the world No 1, meets Australia's Richard

Fromberg in the first round - and could face an even bigger threat in the third round in the form of Mark Philippoussis.

Andre Agassi, who beat Sampras in the final last year, has a much easier path to help him back to fitness after a three-month lay-off caused by an injured chest muscle. He opens against a qualifier and is then scheduled to face his fellow American Vince Spadea.

Monica Seles was installed as the pre-favourite in the absence of the injured Steffi Graf. She starts against a qualifier and should ease through to the semi-finals, where she is expected to meet Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

The defending champion, Mary Pierce, is in the same quarter as Kimiko Date, and is seeded to meet the No 2, Conchita Martinez, in the semi-finals.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

■ We would have a World Cup qualifying game around October or November and I would be in court for several weeks. Terry Venables explains why he resigned as England football coach.

■ Terry's decision had nothing to do with what is being written in the papers - they are comics anyway. Fred Venables, the coach's father.

■ I'm interested in managing nobody but Newcastle United. Kevin Keegan rules himself out of the England running.

■ I have 18 months left of my contract and I won't be moving while I'm under that contract. As does Bryan Robson.

■ You've hit a few in your time. Let's finish it in the tunnel. What, Terry McDermott is alleged to have said to Bruce Riech at Highbury.

■ I'm feeling battered and bruised and more in need of recuperation

than my players. Howard Wilkinson, Leeds manager, after their 4-2 FA Cup win at Derby.

■ Sunderland came here to play a cup tie but we treated it just like a normal game. Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson forgets to look at his fixture list.

■ These are troubled times. Warrington coach, Olive Griffiths, reflects on their 54-14 rugby league defeat by St Helens, three days after they lost 80-0 to them.

■ I am sad to leave a potential sleeping giant with a great history, but without players I cannot work miracles. We just about know what Peter Roe, who resigned as Barrow coach, means.

■ I don't care what anyone says, it is difficult when family and friends are around. Ray Winstone blames off-the-field distractions for England's cricketers losing the final Test.

NEWCASTLE

HYPERION

12.40 Highbank, 1.10 Lady Boy, 1.45 The Bud Club, 2.20 Dominie, 2.55 Addington Boy, 3.25 Whistler, 3.55 Jalcanto

GOING: Good.

■ Course is on AI, 1st March of term. ADMISSION: £1.12; 12-15; 16-18; 19-21; 22-24; 25-27; 28-30; 31-31; 32-32; 33-33; 34-34; 35-35; 36-36; 37-37; 38-38; 39-39; 40-40; 41-41; 42-42; 43-43; 44-44; 45-45; 46-46; 47-47; 48-48; 49-49; 50-50; 51-51; 52-52; 53-53; 54-54; 55-55; 56-56; 57-57; 58-58; 59-59; 60-60; 61-61; 62-62; 63-63; 64-64; 65-65; 66-66; 67-67; 68-68; 69-69; 70-70; 71-71; 72-72; 73-73; 74-74; 75-75; 76-76; 77-77; 78-78; 79-79; 80-80; 81-81; 82-82; 83-83; 84-84; 85-85; 86-86; 87-87; 88-88; 89-89; 90-90; 91-91; 92-92; 93-93; 94-94; 95-95; 96-96; 97-97; 98-98; 99-99; 100-100; 101-101; 102-102; 103-103; 104-104; 105-105; 106-106; 107-107; 108-108; 109-109; 110-110; 111-111; 112-112; 113-113; 114-114; 115-115; 116-116; 117-117; 118-118; 119-119; 120-120; 121-121; 122-122; 123-123; 124-124; 125-125; 126-126; 127-127; 128-128; 129-129; 130-130; 131-131; 132-132; 133-133; 134-134; 135-135; 136-136; 137-137; 138-138; 139-139; 140-140; 141-141; 142-142; 143-143; 144-144; 145-145; 146-146; 147-147; 148-148; 149-149; 150-150; 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Cavalier has odds and attitude on his side

GREG WOOD

Victor Chandler and Ladbrokes are both bookmakers, but this afternoon Britain's punters get two very different approaches to the business of laying odds. The feature race in Britain is the Victor Chandler Chase at Ascot, fiercely competitive yet offering backers a fair crack of the whip. In Ireland, by contrast, the 10th running of the Ladbrokes Hurdle is once again a hopeless raffle giving punters as little chance of success as possible.

Chandler, of course, is a bookie of the old school, shouting the odds on the rails and always prepared to back his own judgement by laying an extra point about a horse he does not fancy. Not that he will have any difficulty finding backers for all but a couple of the runners in his race this afternoon. As ever, it has attracted a high-quality field, but this year's renewal is one of the most competitive yet, with established performers from the top rank such as Egypt Mill Prince taking on upwardly mobile chasers like Front Street and Martin's Lamp.

Egypt Mill Prince has probably been attempting the impossible on his last two outings, when second both in the Dublin Flyer in the Mackeson Cup and then to Lonsome

Glory, the best chaser in America, who for some reason was weighted like a struggling novice for his British debut. Jenny Pitman's runner is painfully vulnerable to an improving, unexposed rival with a low weight, however, and to

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Seasonal Splendour
(Ascot 1.00)
NB: Trail Boss
(Warwick 12.55)

day's contest has a long list of candidates. There is no shortage either of form lines to connect them, but firm conclusions are rather harder to come by. Front Street, three times a winner this season, beat Martin's Lamp four weeks ago but is now 6lb worse off for

four lengths. Front Street has also beaten Gales Cavalier, who in turn has finished second to Kibree and, last season, Dancing Paddy. Add in the ever-changing burdens involved and not one of those results is guaranteed to be repeated.

Confused? You should be. One obvious point, though, is that with so many credible winners, there can be no value in a short price about Front Street or, in particular, Martin's Lamp, who may contract still further this morning following Adrian Maguire's double at Ascot yesterday. In a difficult race, preference must be for a runner at longer odds, and while Dancing Paddy is too long at 14-1, Gales Cavalier (2-10) at 14-1 is the pick of the prices.

That nice Mr Chandler also lends his support to the open-

ing novice hurdle, another fascinating contest with any number of possible winners. This trip is far from certain to suit either Tennessee Twist or Wisley Wonder and BUTTERCUP JOE (nap 1.00) and Adrian Maguire are the pair to be on. The same jockey has every chance of recording a swift double on Seven Of Diamonds (1.35).

The 25-runner contest at Leopardstown should be avoided - four of the last six winners have started at 20-1 or greater. Those who cannot resist should consider both the poor record of British challengers - which this year are headed by the Simon Dwyer-trained, Richard Dwyer-ridden Chief's Song - and the success of Paddy Mullins and Arthur Moore, Mullins's Gambolling Doc has clearly been laid out for the race, but then so have most of the others.

At Warwick, As De Carres, one of the best chasers in France, tackles British fences for the first time following his somewhat bizarre appearance in the Tolworth Hurdle at Sandown seven days ago. Today's trip and company will be much more to his liking - the Grand National is his principal target. A safe round of jumping is the most we can expect from Moorcroft Boy, racing today for the first time since a near-fatal fall at Aintree in November 1994.

LADBROKE HANDICAP 10-YEAR-OLD										
1996 97 98 99 00 01 02 03 04 05 06										
Fate of the favourites										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Winner's place in betting										
1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Starting prices										
1	5-2	5-4	16-1	20-1	7-1	20-1	20-1	10-1	25-1	1
Ages										
6	6	6	6	7	10	6	7	5	7	5
Weight										
10-13	11-13	11-13	10-11	11-15	10-13	10-12	10-13	10-13	10-13	10-13
Profit or loss to 5.5 times favourite -£6.50 Second favourite +£2.00										
Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last year: 50%										
Shortest-priced winner: Barmouth Lad 2-1 (1987)										
Longest-priced winner: Justice 25-1 (1995)										
Top trainers: P Mullins (1989), P Mulrennan (1990), P Mulrennan (1991), P Mulrennan (1992), P Mulrennan (1993), P Mulrennan (1994), P Mulrennan (1995), P Mulrennan (1996), P Mulrennan (1997), P Mulrennan (1998), P Mulrennan (1999), P Mulrennan (2000), P Mulrennan (2001), P Mulrennan (2002), P Mulrennan (2003), P Mulrennan (2004), P Mulrennan (2005), P Mulrennan (2006)										
Top jockeys: J J Telford (1989), J J Telford (1990), J J Telford (1991), J J Telford (1992), J J Telford (1993), J J Telford (1994), J J Telford (1995), J J Telford (1996), J J Telford (1997), J J Telford (1998), J J Telford (1999), J J Telford (2000), J J Telford (2001), J J Telford (2002), J J Telford (2003), J J Telford (2004), J J Telford (2005), J J Telford (2006)										

sport

Willems treads path of football romance

When Vinnie Jones sought to justify his scything challenge on Roud Gullit by being "aining the money-grabbing foreigners" who had "danced and pranced on British soccer", he raised wry smiles at Derby County as well as the bizarre image of a bunch of mincing mercenaries.

Jim Smith, manager of the First Division leaders, has always felt that more dancing and prancing would not go amiss amid the domestic hurly burly. "We need fewer labourers," he says, meaning no disrespect to Jones's previous profession, "and more artists."

Putting Derby's money where his mouth is, Smith has bought Igor Stimac, Croatia's answer to Franz Beckenbauer, plus two Dutchmen, Robin Van der Laan and Ron Willems, since arriving last summer. Van der Laan, the captain, speaks with a Potters accent and is easily mistaken for a British midfielder after five years here.

Willems, while the first to admit he is no Johan Cruyff, is a different story. As one who once pushed Marco van Basten for a place in the Netherlands team, and was eventually succeeded by Dennis Bergkamp at Ajax, he brings distinctively Continental qualities to life below the Premiership.

Whisper it to Vinnie, but that world is becoming ever more cosmopolitan. For example, Derby's visitors today. Reading, have a Bulgarian goalkeeper, Bobby Mihailov, and a Polish defender, Dariusz Wondolowski. Next week the man shadowing Willems may be Canada's most capped player, Randy Samuel. He is now with Port Vale, against whom Russia's Sergei Yuran and Vasily Kulikov make their Millwall debuts this afternoon.

The Moscow Spartak duo appeared in all six Champions' League matches in the autumn. Willems could have done likewise, having helped Grasshopper of Zurich to the Swiss title last season, only to join Derby for £300,000. What possessed him to do it?

One of the First Division's most exciting imports talks to Phil Shaw about how his expectations have been met since joining Derby County from Grasshopper Zurich

The answer, in part, lies in the very room we are in, the directors' suite in the bowels of the Baseball Ground. Here, where Derby players once barricaded themselves in to demand Brian Clough's reinstatement, Willems gestures in awe at the trophies, mementoes and pictures of bygone Rams. This money-grabbing foreigner is, it transpires, a bit of a football romantic.

Even the location of the stadium, among a labyrinth of red-brick terraced houses near

'Here the atmosphere's great and there's more strength in depth than in Europe'

the city centre, influenced his choice. "Football is the people's game and it shouldn't be out of town in the country or the suburbs," he says, "though I know clubs sometimes have to move to make progress. Before games, you see the crowds going along the streets, which is exciting."

"People have said I must be crazy to leave Zurich for this. But we'd just won the championship and hardly anyone in the city seemed to have noticed. I wanted a fresh challenge, somewhere where football really matters. Here the grounds are full, the atmosphere's great and there's more strength in depth than in Europe."

To support his argument, Willems looks back to meetings with Leeds in the two cups and a friendly. Derby lost each one, yet twice they were level en-

tering stoppage time. In the Netherlands, for all the achievements at international level, he perceives a "big difference" not only between the top division and the rest, but between three teams and the others.

While the name of Ajax leaps out of his CV, Willems made his initial impact with a provincial club, Zwolle. He was associated with them from the age of six - he is now 29 - and appeared in the First Division before his 16th birthday. From there he moved to Twente Enschede, where the former Derby and England winger Gordon Hill was a colleague, and was top scorer for the Dutch Olympic side.

When he landed his big move to Ajax, in 1988, he was a contender for the national team. But first van Basten saw off all rivals by having a brilliant European Championship; then injuries meant Willems' club partnership with the Swede, Stefan Petersen, was stillborn. A useful teenager slipped into the void. "Bergkamp took my place, and to be fair he did it quite well," he recalls, chuckling at the understatement.

As a player bought rather than developed by Ajax, he felt he was not "part of the process". During his fifth year in Amsterdam, he decided he was too old to sit on the bench and began looking for a club. Nottingham Forest, then in their relegation season, invited him over.

"I played in the reserves, scored and thought I'd done well. But I was told Brian Clough didn't even watch the game and I never heard another thing about it. Now I've ended up 15 miles away. It's a small world."

A compatriot, Leo Beenhakker, signed him for Grasshopper, where Willems



Ram-raider: Ron Willems, whose goal rate has soared since moving behind the front two, trains for Derby

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

fulfilled his early potential alongside Ciriaco Sforza and Alain Sutter. The hankering to try "a big football country" remained strong, however. After a glowing reference from Roy Hodgson, who was then Switzerland's manager and now coaches Internazionale of Milan, Smith snapped him up.

Willems' strength and heading ability - he is a six-footer - led Derby to use him as an out-and-out attacker until a chance conversation at a reserve match. Joe Jordan asked whether he was playing behind the front two. When Smith said no, Jordan remembered

Willems was "different class" for Ajax in the floating role favoured by the likes of Beardsley, Sheringham, Barnaby and of course Bergkamp.

Anyone operating there must be part-midfielder - with good passing skills - and part-striker - able to make runs into scoring positions. In November, when Smith was at last able to play Willems, Marco Gabbiadini and Dean Sturridge together, he decided the former's touch and intelligence made him ideally suited to playing off the front pair.

"The attraction," according to Smith, "is that more often

than not, no one picks him up. Huddersfield went man-for-man on Ronnie, but he still got the winner. I used this system successfully at Portsmouth with Alan McLoughlin, and probably only two teams a season man-marked him."

The revised formation, incorporating Stimac as sweeper, swept Derby from 17th to top in seven weeks. Willems scored eight times in nine games, and is relishing in the freedom the position allows.

"There's not much space to play in this division. Against Leeds and in another friendly with Spurs, we found they gave us

more room. If we do go up, I think our style would suit the Premiership."

Willems' observations on the game in his adopted country are instructive in this, the year of the European Championship. If training at Derby is "not so different" to Ajax, there is less time to practise because of the congested fixture lists. He also finds the length of the seasons here, up to two and a half hours, "a bit surprising."

Technically, players in England are better than Willems was led to believe. He sees a greater disparity in tactics, being amazed by the number of

managers deploying four defenders against two strikers. "We're more advanced in the Netherlands, but that can make boring football where everyone cancels each other out. You don't get many games like last week, when we were two up on Leeds and lost 4-2."

As for the famed ferocity of League football, Willems has mixed feelings. "The tempo is very fast, relentless, but I've got no problems with the tackles as long as they're on the ball." Which is where we came in, although Mr Jones and the Premiership can wait until next season.

TEAM NEWS

Bolton v Wimbledon
Bolton seek their first Premiership win in 12 attempts without central defenders Farnough and Ingham, who both start two-game bans. But Bergson is back from suspension. Lee, fit again after hernia problems, is in the squad. Wimbledon still without the suspended Jones, look set to keep the side which drew at Watford in the FA Cup.

Everton v Chelsea
Everton's Ferguson is still struggling with a hamstring injury but Arnolich is back from Nigeria following his country's withdrawal from the African Nations Cup. Southall is struggling with a stomach infection and Watson is suspended but fellow defender Short has passed a fitness test on the back. Chelsea's goalkeeper Hennigan picked up a groin strain on Sunday and Hitchcock should take over. Gullit returns after missing the FA Cup game with a back problem and Petrescu, injured in that game, is fit.

Leeds v West Ham
With top scorer Yeboah and Mesinger on African Nations' Cup duty and Deane suspended, Chapman, back at Elland Road on loan, is set to make his first Leeds appearance since May 1993 against another of his former clubs. Chapman could come face-to-face with White, one of his teammates in Leeds' 1992 title-winning team, who has joined West Ham on loan and is set to play at centre-back with Potts moving to right-back.

Man Utd v Aston Villa
Manchester United welcome back Schuster, who missed the FA Cup game with Sunderland, and Scholes, who has recovered from flu and is set to replace suspended Beckham. Villa will give a start to Taylor but are without leading scorer York, who is on duty with Trinidad and Tobago.

Middlesbrough v Arsenal
Middlesbrough have four defenders missing, with Cox suspended and Fleming, Morris and White injured. Player-manager Robson is struggling with a cold injury, but Florot is fit again.

after three matches out. Arsenal could hand a first appearance of the season to McGowan. With Winterburn banned and Bould injured, the 19-year-old challenges Morrow for a place.

Nottn Forest v Southampton
Frank Clark enjoys the luxury of a fully-fit squad so Fettes, a £450,000 signing from Hull, is unlikely to figure. Southampton are considering Berah replacing Charlton at left-back while Watson may miss out in favour of Maddison.

QPR v Blackburn
Hateley, out of three matches with a broken nose, is back in contention as QPR seek to end a run of three successive Premiership defeats. Blackburn have Gudmundsson, Fenton and Warhurst available after injury.

Sheffield Wed v Liverpool
Wednesday's Nicol is set to face his former club and goalkeeper Woods and left-back Bruce are also back in the squad to challenge Pressman, Sinton and Stefanovic. Liverpool's Ruddock plays his first game in six weeks while Babb is recalled. The pair replace Wright and Harkness, who began two-match bans. Rush again has to settle for a substitute's role.

Tottenham v Man City
Tottenham bring in Dozzell, while Wilson is set to face his former club after missing three matches with ankle and groin injuries. Kerslake and Turner are also included in the squad. City will play the inexperienced Ingram at left-back because Ian Wright is suspended. Morganston is named as the substitute goalkeeper, with Cotton, set for a move to Sunderland, left out.

Coventry v Newcastle
Coventry have Ndlovu, out for four matches, and Brown, who has missed 11, back in contention. Newcastle must do without injured England duo Howey (hamstring) and Lee (knee), while Albert is suffering from flu. Goalkeeper Robson is available after six games out injured.

Newcastle face another grey day

The Newcastle United of panache seems to have problems getting out of the North-east at the moment. Place them on Tyneside and there is no more invigorating sight in English football, distance them from where the supportive pulse beats strongest and the black and white seems to pale.

They have not won outside St James' Park since 29 November and if that Coca-Cola Cup win over Liverpool is subtracted, the sum is even worse. Invincible at home, Newcastle are anything but on their travels and you have to go back to their 3-2 win at Queen's Park Rangers on 14 October since they prevailed away in the League.

That, more than anything, is sustaining a dwindling chasing pack who would otherwise have grounds for despair, given the seven-point lead Newcastle have at the top of the Premiership and that Kevin Keegan has no intention of going overboard to become the England manager.

Nevertheless, Keegan is more aware than anyone that Newcastle's position is not impregnable. "You can't put plaudits in the trophy cabinet," was his snorted reply when it was pointed out his team are winning the applause of the neutral.

"We need to improve." Tomorrow's visit to Coventry will gauge whether the midweek defeat at Arsenal has had a

draining effect on confidence. "We have got to get back to basics," Keegan continued. "We know it will be a tough game and if we play like we did on Wednesday we will make it tougher. They could turn us over."

Manchester United are the team with the clearest view of the leaders, although they have looked more dead than red in the away matches too, recently. At least Alex Ferguson, the United manager, can select from a stronger hand this time for today's home game against Aston Villa, with Peter Schmeichel and Paul Scholes both fit.

There is also the considerable bonus that Andy Cole seems to

Guy Hodgson looks forward to the weekend's crucial Premiership games

be operating on somewhere near the same wavelength as his team-mates. He has scored four times in his last five matches, after a spell when he did not look as though he could strike a match and had the happy omen of knowing he got his first goal for United against today's opponents 12 months ago.

"I have broad shoulders," Cole said, and they have become even broader since mov-

ing to Old Trafford. "I have grown up a lot. I knew it was going to be difficult, but I have always believed I can score goals."

Cole's main barriers will be two former United players, Paul McGrath and Mark Bosnich, neither of whom will feel inclined to usher the striker towards greater maturity. "I had a fantastic spell at Old Trafford," Bosnich, the Villa goalkeeper, said, "and I will always be grateful to the coaching staff, who helped bring me along. It would be great to get a result. We have got to be positive if we want to get into Europe."

No team are more positive at the moment than Liverpool, who have scored 20 goals in

their last six matches, accruing five wins and a draw. They travel to Sheffield Wednesday with Newcastle coming into sight and with Neil Ruddock and Phil Babb fit again. They are likely to replace the suspended Mark Wright and Steve Harkness.

Eight days ago, there were grounds for believing Wednesday were viable FA Cup winners, but they subsided in a desperate performance at Charlton. John Scales, the Liverpool central defender, believes that Wednesday's reaction to that defeat will be Liverpool's greatest threat.

"They will want to bounce back from a bad, bad result," he said, "and they'll be anxious to make amends, particularly in front of their own supporters. It will be a difficult game."

As it will be at Burnden Park, where Bolton's chances of survival will look even more hopeless if they cannot defeat fellow-strugglers Wimbledon. Their new coach, Ian Porterfield - a brave man - has been studying videos of recent performances and has lambasted the lack of concentration, particularly towards the end of games.

"We needed a kick up the backside," Alan Stubbs, the Bolton captain, said. "There have been some real video nasties." His supporters would certainly agree.

United guilty of poaching

Manchester United were yesterday found guilty of making an illegal approach to the teenager Matthew Wicks, but escaped serious punishment from the Football Association.

The FA held an inquiry following allegations by Arsenal over Wicks, son of the former Chelsea centre-back Steve, but United escaped with being ordered to pay the costs of two hearings after they were found guilty of breaching FA Premier League rule F20.7.

The rule states that "no club shall directly or indirectly approach any boy who is registered as an associated schoolboy with another club with a view to inducing the boy to register with such first mentioned club."

Wicks was registered with Arsenal, who complained to the FA when the central defender later signed for the Old Trafford club.

Wicks, meanwhile, is said to be unhappy with life in the north and is keen to return to a London-based club.

Sunderland have offered Manchester City £200,000 for their unsold goalkeeper, Tony Cotton, who has been unable to dislodge the German international Elke Immel from City's starting line-up.

Bolton yesterday imported the 29-year-old Milan defender Enzo Gambiro on a month's loan. The 29-year-old former Sampdoria and Parma player is currently out of contract.

West Bromwich Albion have taken the Everton full-back Paul Holmes on loan in a bid to halt their run of 11 successive defeats in the Endleigh First Division. The 27-year-old former Birmingham player will make his debut against Wolves at The Hawthorns today.

Kerry Dixon's travels round leading southern clubs during a 16-year career took in a seventh stop yesterday when the striker joined Watford from Millwall for a nominal fee.

Italy's players' union has warned that if any Italian club relaxed restrictions on the number of foreign players fielded in a match, it would seek their suspension from the league championship.

Trevor Francis lost Wednesday the championship when he asked a proud Frenchman to stay for a second week's trial rather than signing him on

A few weeks ago Marc Degryse asked Wednesday supporters to give him time to settle into the side before expecting him to produce top form. He should be assured that patience is a prime virtue in any Owls fan: last championship success, 1929-30; too good for the Second Division in the 50s but not good enough for the First - hence the sobriquet "yo-yo club"; barely escaping relegation to the lowest division in 1975-6; four appearances at Wembley in 1993 with no cup to show for it.

And then there's the 1966 FA Cup final. My daughter was snugly tucked away when disturbed by her mother's newly acquired enthusiasm for football at the World Cup final, and her

father's despair at the better team losing in the domestic final after leading Everton by two goals. Even that might have been bearable had not a Cornishman scored the vital fluky goals for the other side. "When have Cornishmen played football?" I asked my wife, a native of St Ives? The word football translates to rugby in that part of the world. Oh yes, Marc, we know all about patience at Hillsborough.

The dark days of 1975-6 saw defeat by Darlington in the League Cup, and Charlton Athletic in the FA Cup, rescued by victory against Southend in the last game of the season to avoid descent into the Fourth Division.

Then Jack Charlton arrived in 1977. Never mind what he has done

FAN'S EYE VIEW No 132 Sheffield Wednesday Colin Cooke

for Ireland, Big Jack is a hero to Owls supporters for turning the tide of football failure in Sheffield 6. Combining local heroes such as Sterland and Shirdiff with imported stars like Banister, Megson and Shelton produced a team which was professional in attitude, never giving less than their best. With the captain, Mike Lyons, driving the younger players around him, we almost reached the old First

Division before Jack decided to "go fishin'" on a more regular basis.

Howard Wilkinson fulfilled the promises made by Jack in taking us into the old First Division, and then Ron Atkinson built a fine team, albeit achieving relegation in the process, just to keep our feet on the ground, before deserting to Aston Villa. Trevor Francis lost Wednesday the championship when he asked a

proud Frenchman to stay for a second week's trial rather than signing him on a well-established reputation. Look what has happened to Cantona's clubs since.

Players and managers view a club on the short timescale of their tenure, much as a government looks at a country, and often with similar, dismal results. Lifelong supporters learn to accept the slings and arrows of unfelicitous fate, hoping yet scarcely believing that success will come.

David Pleat is building a new team which might bring the championship to Hillsborough in a few years' time, but whether that is in the First Division or the Premier League is in doubt at the moment. The su-

perb performances of Degryse and Chris Waddle in the recent demolition of Leeds were a delight to behold but were inevitably followed by more insipid results, confirming the reputation for inconsistency.

It would have been nice to win a cup final at Wembley while Waddle was still in the team, and there always seemed to be a chance if only someone would beat Arsenal for us. But those upstairs at Charlton played us off the pitch, even with 10 men for much of the second half. The only consolation is that now we don't have to support the Blades in their replay against Arsenal. We can concentrate on the League and aim for a second appearance in the Intertoto cup. Europe here we come.

Curious challenge to establishment

■ Pakistan yesterday recalled their veteran batsman, Javed Miandad, after more than two years' absence to the 14-man squad, led by Wasim Akram, for the forthcoming World Cup. Miandad has played 228 one-day matches for his country since making his debut 20 years ago.

High tee-up: Austria's Werner Schliager serves against Karolyi Nandor in a qualifying table tennis event in Manchester yesterday

...meth, of Hungary, at the Olympic
Photograph: David Ashdown

■ Edward Jones last night resigned as the Welsh union secretary because of his reluctance to work within the new professional dispensation agreed by the International Boiard and changes introduced by the WRU.

Orrell's path to professionalism came at what may, the Australian having agreed a three-year deal which is not dependent on Sarries' retaining their status. Mind you, it would help, not least in ensuring Nigel Wray remains happy about hantroling the club to the tune of £2.5m.

he will have to chair the same executive who self-evidently have no confidence in him. Hereby may lie the RFU's salvation: as Brittle will be answerable to the executive, we can suppose he will fulfil their will. And then they can go to the AGM in July and try all over again.



95%	11.1	snow	mud
100%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
100%	12.1	snow	snow
100%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
75%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
100	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
100%	11.1	clear	sunny
100%	11.1	clear	sunny
15%	7.1	windy	windy
10%	7.1	windy	windy

Snow reports						
Report	Conditions (Lower)	Conditions (Upper)	Area open	Last snow	Weather	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Adressa	powdery	powdery	90%	10.1	bright	snow
AUSTRIA						
Mayrhofen	closed	good	80%	8.1	dull	clear
St Anton	far	packed	90%	8.1	clear	clear
Seefeld	good	good	100%	8.1	clear	clear
FRANCE						
Vallée d'Aoste	packed	powdery	50%	11.1	snow	mixed
Chamonix	patchy	50%	85%	11.1	snow	mixed
Vers le Col de la Vanoise	packed	powdery	95%	11.1	snow	mixed
ITALY						
Selva	good	powdery	100%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
Thalès	powdery	100%	11.1	cloudy	snow	cloudy
Canazei	far	100%	7.1	cloudy	snow	cloudy
SWITZERLAND						
Zermatt	far	good	75%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
Evolee	hard	good	100%	7.1	cloudy	cloudy
UNITED STATES & CANADA						
Brackenhedge	powder	powder	100%	11.1	clear	sun
Copper Mtn	powder	powder	100%	11.1	clear	sun
SCOTLAND						
Glairgorm	bare	patchy	15%	7.1	windy	mild
Glenshee	patchy	broken	10%	7.1	windy	mild

Uefa ban stuns Spurs and Wimbledon

Football
PHIL SHAW

Tottenham Hotspur and Wimbledon, staggered by yesterday's one-season ban from Europe for failing to enter into the spirit of last summer's Inter-toto Cup, will have the backing of the Football Association and the Premier League in their appeal to European football's governing body, Uefa.

The suspension – the third

punishment imposed by Uefa in response to the under-strength teams fielded by Spurs and Wimbledon – will be active for five years. If either qualifies for any European competition within that period, they will not be allowed to enter.

After a hastily convened meeting with FA officials, Sam Hammam, Wimbledon's owner, and Peter Barnes, the Spurs secretary, announced their intention to fight the ban. Both Hammam and Spurs' chair-

man, Alan Sugar, reacted with incredulity rather than anger to the Uefa's bolt from the blue, each suggesting it must be the result of a misunderstanding.

An FA spokesman pledged legal and moral backing for Spurs and Wimbledon, although he argued that Lancaster Gale could not be blamed. "We can't be held responsible for what Uefa has decided to do," he said. Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive, offered "full support" to the clubs.

According to Sugar, Spurs had only entered the Inter-toto "by way of a favour" to the FA and Premier League. They understood they had permission from the FA to field sides comprising loan players and reserves in the games, which were staged in June and July when most of their first-team squad were on holiday. With the pitch at White Hart Lane being re-seeded, they were also allowed to play at Brighton.

"There must be a major mis-

understanding and I'm sure it'll be cleared up very shortly," Sugar said last night. He said the FA's sanction was confirmed in writing and that Spurs received an assurance from Uefa by phone that "nothing would happen if we proceeded on that basis".

He added: "Therefore the wires have been crossed somewhere and I'm sure it will be resolved. I'm sure the FA and Premier League will back up exactly what I have said. All the other chairmen know this was the

case as it was agreed at a Premier League meeting at which Rick Parry and Graham Kelly (the FA chief executive) were present." Wimbledon also played at Brighton with a team reinforced by "outsiders", Hammam said: "I'm sure there's a misunderstanding. We went into the Inter-toto not because of money but because of a threat that all English clubs would be banned from Europe if we didn't. We were proud to do that at the time."

Hammam was "optimistic" that the "honourable and able people in Uefa" would listen sympathetically to their appeal. "This isn't a case for Wimbledon to deal with. It is for the whole of English football to be united."

Uefa had already withheld the financial reward the two clubs were due for entering the Inter-toto. Then last month it reduced from four to three the number of places for English clubs in next season's Uefa Cup because of the "poor atti-

tude" of Spurs and Wimbledon. "We knew Uefa were unhappy," an FA spokesman said. "They felt the clubs hadn't entered into the spirit of the competition." Spurs' captain, Gary Mabbutt, was "devastated" by the ban. Wimbledon twice missed out on Europe because of the ban that followed the Heysel disaster. The third English entrants, Sheffield Wednesday, escaped with a Uefa reprimand, having been second in their section.

Football, page 26

Francis is latest to snub England job

GUY HODGSON

The pool of talent the Football Association will draw from to appoint a successor to Terry Venables as England coach took on the over-riding abundance of a Yorkshire Water reservoir yesterday when two more candidates withdrew from consideration.

Gerry Francis, a former England captain and now manager of Tottenham Hotspur, said his immediate future lay in club

football and implored the FA to press Venables to change his mind. Chelsea's Glenn Hoddle, meanwhile, joined Kevin Keegan, Bryan Robson, Joe Royle and Ray Wilkins in saying he was not interested in the job.

Francis, who slipped from the bookies' favourite to second in the running, made his statement in response to what he described as "intense media speculation". It was also delivered before the surprise announcement that Spurs have been sus-

pended for a year from European competition by Uefa.

"Although my agreement with Tottenham expires this summer," he said, "at the present time I am of the same opinion as I was two years ago, when I was interviewed about the England position. That is that if my future is in football, it would be at club level. I would also urge the Football Association to persist, if possible, to try to persuade Terry to change his mind and not to lose the invaluable experience gained over the last two years."

Hoddle's contract at Stamford Bridge runs out at the end of the season, which would coincide with Venables stepping down after the European Championship final in June. He has not signed a new deal but he discounted any chance of his becoming England coach.

"I haven't even thought about it," he said. "I don't wish to look and plan too far ahead. I have got enough problems of my own as a club manager." He, too, spoke of the need for continuity in the England camp.

William Hill offer odds of 8-1 about Venables doing a U-turn and remaining in charge for the opening World Cup qualifying tie next September. Puzzled punters, meanwhile, have laid on to Howard Wilkinson and Frank Clark as likely contenders.

Hill's have cut Wilkinson's rating from 8-1 to 5-2 joint second favourite, while Clark – his Nottingham Forest side are England's only European survivors – has come in from 33-1 to 20-1.

Wilkinson is under contract at Leeds until the summer of 1997, refused to discuss his chances of landing the post. He said: "I have nothing to say about the job – and that includes questions on whether I want it or don't want it – or the qualities required to do the job, the possible candidates or any other aspects of this particular issue."

The Middlesbrough manager, Robson, despite his claims, is the 7-4 favourite for the post, with the former Switzerland manager, Roy Hodgson, now in charge at Internazionale, 12-1.

A spokesman for William Hill, Graham Sharpe, said: "We are very sceptical about high profile managers who make diplomatic statements stressing how happy they are with their current jobs. We believe most managers are so confident of their own abilities they would find it almost impossible to turn down running the national side if offered it directly."

Candidates fill the 'No' lobby

Tummy Docherty, a man with a ready quote for most situations, summed up life in charge of a football team. "Management these days is like nuclear war," he said. "No winners, just survivors."

The most primitive urge of all, the need to survive, is coming into play as the search to replace Terry Venables as England coach lurches towards a compromise. At one time only the best was good enough to lead the nation's football team, now it would seem we will have to make do with either the bravest or most foolhardy.

Gerry Francis, who has always come across as a sensible man, confirmed that opinion yesterday when he said the England job was not for him. He joined a herd of young managers like Kevin Keegan, Bryan Robson, Ray Wilkins, Joe Royle and Glenn Hoddle who had looked at the spirit-buckling pressures inflicted on Venables and his predecessor, Graham Taylor, and decided the chances of a happy life would be improved by remaining at their clubs.

Who can blame them? It takes a soul of granite consistency not to flinch when confronted with "Turnip" headlines and even those with the necessary iron would probably prefer not to have their private lives investigated with the toothcomb intensity that the tabloids apply. The England job has become the most difficult of them all.

So where does the growing list of refusniks leave the Football Association? Graham Kelly, the governing body's chief executive, says the preference is for an English former interna-

Guy Hodgson considers the FA's options in finding a national coach

tional but the perfect man appears to be an impossible dream. If the denials are taken at face value the only Premier League managers who would meet the criteria are Brian Little, Colin Todd and Alan Ball and none has had sufficient success at club level to merit proper attention. The FA will have to compromise or change someone's mind.

Of the latter category, Robson would seem the most amenable, given that his "no" was the least emphatic. A man whose patriotism was as fierce as his tackles might leave the Riverside if he was persuaded his country was in a desperate position. If the FA did bend, Howard Wilkinson would appear a natural candidate. He never played for England but his esteem at Lancaster Gate is high and he has something on his cv that, among current English managers, only Howard Kendall can match: winning the championship. He has also not ruled himself out.

A final compromise may yet prove the most attractive, however. One man will become available in 1997 who has played for England and had international management experience. The FA could ask Robson or Keegan to carry the candidate they most crave for the job. Then Terry Venables would become the most successful survivor of them all.



The most famous umpire in the world: The inimitable Dickie Bird relaxes on holiday in Torquay yesterday. He retires from Test cricket at Lord's this summer. Photograph: Marc Hill

'Dickie' to bow out at Lord's Test

Cricket

The man who almost made a career out of bad light will be disappearing into the shadows in June. Harold "Dickie" Bird, for years considered the best umpire in the world, will stand in his last international match when he takes charge of the second Test between England and India at Lord's.

The 62-year-old Yorkshireman, one of the few sports officials to emerge beyond the boundaries of his game as a personality, has brought a unique blend of the exotic and the excellent to each of the world-record 65 Tests and 92 one-day internationals he has officiated in since 1973.

His exaggerated gestures and his look of constant harassment at being in the middle of high-pressure international sport made for wonderfully entertaining television, and even turned him into an object of ridicule at times. But he disguised an absolute grasp of the game and a remarkable ability to get half-time decisions correct.

In recent seasons he has begun to prove fallible, however, and although he will continue to stand in the county game, he is retiring from the international circuit. "I always said that I want to go out at the top. I want to go out gracefully and I want to be remembered," he said. "I don't want to go on too long and people to say that Dickie Bird's slipping and I think it's the time to go."

Bird's standing in the game, with players, spectators and

Hugh Bateson on a retiring umpire to whom strange things happened

commentators, is guaranteed. The editor of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanac*, Matthew Engel, said: "Dickie's retirement will be a terrible loss for Test cricket in the sense that he has been so much more than an umpire. He has contributed hugely to the humour of the game."

Stories about Bird are legion. Allan Lamb and Ian Botham played the most famous prank on him (which Bird tells against himself in his regular after-dinner speeches) when Lamb entrusted Bird with his mobile telephone while he was batting in a Test match. Bird dutifully put it in his pocket, and was startled when it started ringing in the middle of the game. Botham was on the line asking Lamb to play a few shots.

He also seemed to attract the unusual in Test cricket. In last summer's Test between England and the West Indies at Old Trafford, Bird had to halt the game because of too much sunlight when the reflected glare off a glass door was dazzling a batsman.

And he was in charge at Headingley in the 1987 match between England and the West Indies, when water mysteriously began emerging from underground, forcing another lengthy postponement. A drain was blocked.

Lord's will be awaiting his swan-song with some trepidation. England's space race, page 27

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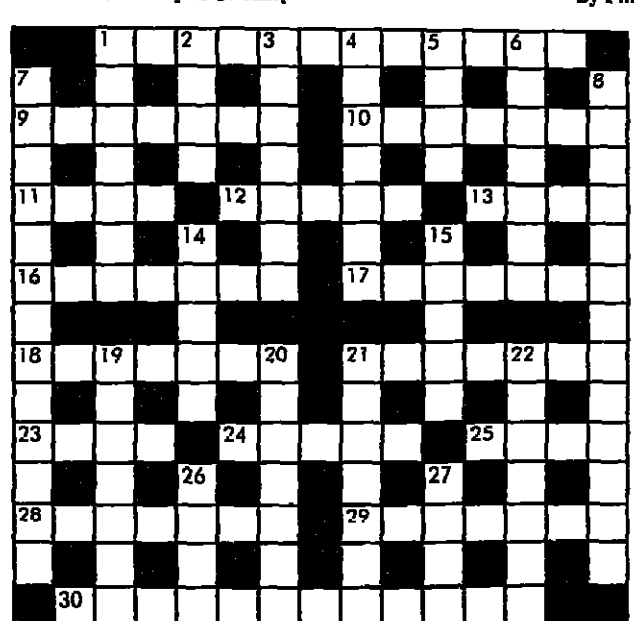
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

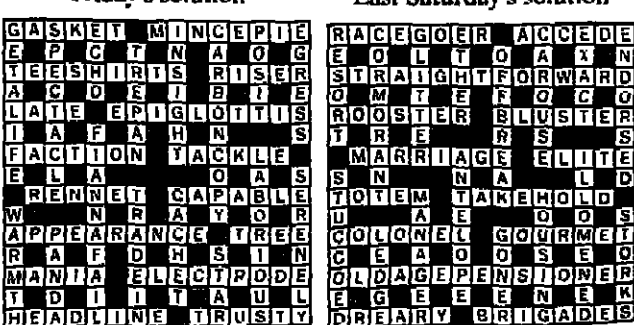
No. 2882, Saturday 13 January

By Phil



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



ACROSS

DOWN

- 1 Military supporter affected to flourish, circling round line (4-9)
- 9 Source of energy that's about despatch (7)
- 10 Eating disorders, produced by new body chemical (7)
- 11 Suitable encounter (4)
- 12 Opening moves exhibiting no good range (5)
- 13 Not entirely attractive meal (4)
- 16 Excited about involving American city (7)
- 17 Stuff that's found in bulging hamburgers (7)
- 18 Mistakenly showing mocking humour about long upset (7)
- 21 Island that is seen from behind in most of Indian city (7)
- 23 Biblical heroine in reality decapitated (4)
- 24 Hydrocarbon? Best use this yellow liquid for starters (5)
- 25 Put out while withdrawing (4)
- 28 Goose suitable for Birdman of Alcatraz in later life? (4-5)
- 29 Platform? Run out and play the (7)
- 30 Item for article in *The Independent* giving advice to parachutists? (5,7)
- 1 Church took in gold from castle (7)
- 2 End of game follow? (4)
- 3 Male often in hot spot shows anger over male in cool (7)
- 4 Inclination not to start the dusting? (7)
- 5 Farm produce from layers? Not chickens, principally (4)
- 6 Working legs in hard race (7)
- 7 Initially how one plays Monopoly... (4,3,4,2) ... while at Greenwich? (2,3,8)
- 14 Boards the coach (5)
- 15 Name dropping in affection, displaying offensive attitude (5)
- 19 Go on for longer than a route snaking around West (7)
- 20 One gas upset Right, being less experienced (7)
- 21 What's the point of a story about a yard belonging to the council leader? (7)
- 22 Some swimmers evidently do so (7)
- 26 A stroke from the whip appears endless, unfortunately (4)
- 27 Continent has a former name of a local country curtailed (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the excellent Chambers Encyclopaedia Dictionary, worth £25. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5SL. Please use the box number and postcode. Last week's winners: Mrs G. Seagrave, Bristol; Mrs A. Donovan, West Sussex; Mr R. Scallie, North Humberdale; G. Glover, London EC2H; Bob Madin, Middlesbrough. Last week's winners: RA Morris, Ipswich; Denise, KR Milner, Malvern; Mr LW Blott, Romsey; Hunt; GD Watt, Walsley; Peter Jenner, Reading.

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